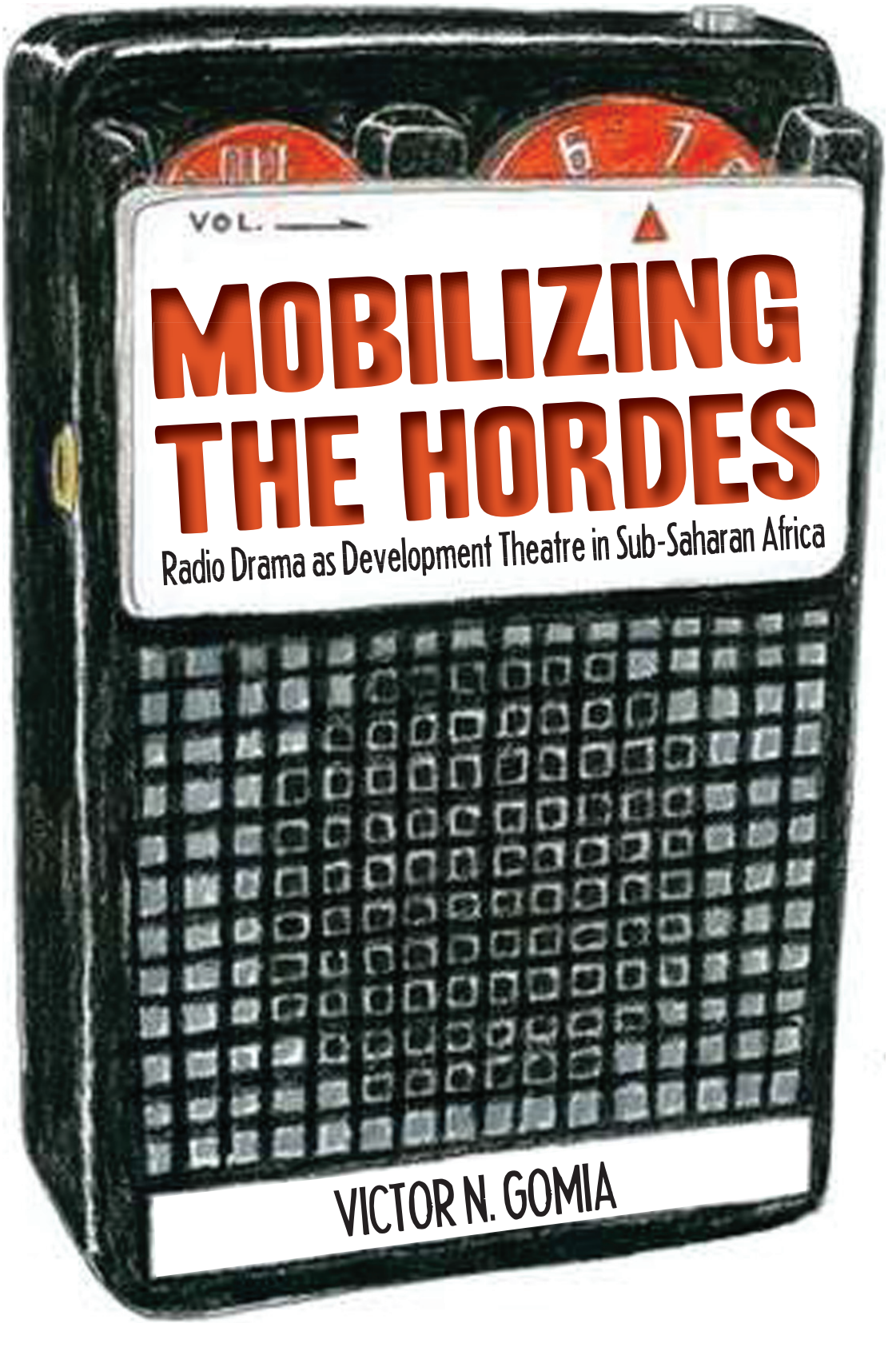


A vintage black portable radio with a white label and a speaker grille. The radio has two red circular meters at the top, one labeled 'VOL.' and the other with numbers '6' and '7'. The title 'MOBILIZING THE HORDES' is printed in large, bold, orange letters on the white label. Below the title, the subtitle 'Radio Drama as Development Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa' is printed in smaller black letters. The author's name 'VICTOR N. GOMIA' is printed in black letters at the bottom of the white label. The speaker grille is a black grid of small squares.

MOBILIZING THE HORDES

Radio Drama as Development Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa

VICTOR N. GOMIA

VISIT...

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Mobilizing the Hordes

Radio Drama as Development Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa

Victor N. Gomia



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Preface

It is with great personal pleasure that I introduce the reader to this seminal work of Dr. Victor Gomia's on the cultural possibilities of Development Theatre delivered in the medium of African radio drama. My encounter with Dr. Gomia in August 2005 was an eventful and fortunate one, I think for both of us. While serving as Chair of the Division of Literature, Languages, and Philosophy at Kentucky State University, I was desperately on the look for an additional instructor of English at a time when our enrollment was greater than expected. Serendipitously, Prof. Gomia appeared in my office at precisely the right time, having just immigrated to the United States. He was at the point of having completed his doctoral thesis, the germ of the current book, but was awaiting his final defense for completion of the Ph.D. Having had a number of Cameroon nationals serving in our Division before, I was well aware of their tradition of rigorous academic preparation and strong work ethic, and Dr. Gomia proved to be no exception. He received the appropriate work visa and immigration papers and was welcomed into our Department of English, where he taught until the end of spring 2011. During a summer hiatus, he was able to travel to the University of Bayreuth in Germany, where he had been doing a good deal of research, and successfully defended his thesis.

My association with him was not only the normal professional relationship one would expect between an administrator and faculty member, but took a distinctive intellectual turn. As a professor of philosophy with wide interdisciplinary interests, I teach and do research not only in my field of specialization, but also in Kentucky State's unique Integrative Studies Program (IGS), an academic division devoted to the exploration of cross-disciplinary interactions and cultural history. As part of my duties in IGS, I regularly teach an undergraduate course entitled "The Modern World," a course required of most baccalaureate degree-seeking students, which focuses on intellectual and cultural revolutions from the

Enlightenment to the emergence of the developing world, post-colonial literature, and the global environmental crisis. During the sessions on post-colonial literature, where we read Frantz Fanon and Chinua Achebe in particular, I would consult with Dr. Gomia; moreover, I invited him to give guest lectures on the history of post-colonial thought and literature with an eye toward assaying the roles of Fanon and Achebe. These lectures were most successful in engaging student interest. Indeed, on the basis of these lectures, I found Dr. Gomia to be quite learned in the history of modern African culture, and I personally learned a great deal from him, gaining a much deeper cultural perspective and context for the study of Fanon and Achebe. While I am not a specialist in this field, I believe I can say with confidence that one of the virtues of the present work is the critical survey it contains of the relevant literatures in the African humanities. As a non-specialist, I certainly found the critical discussion of the literature to be accessible. Thus, the book will have scholarly value, irrespective of whether or not one accepts the particular theses Prof. Gomia is proposing.

In reading this work, I was struck in particular by the following passage which speaks to the essence of what he is attempting to argue:

“The communal participation occasioned by Development Theatre creates a forum for the appreciation of views that have been relegated to the background since independence in Africa. It reconsiders and takes into consideration the ‘old culture’ issue thereby creating the culture of dialogue that sees development as a process and not an imposition by the political or intellectual elite within or without the developing country. In this way, both the political and intellectual elite would recognise the political and creative potential that the people at the grassroots possess.”

For the sake of the development of democratic pluralism, health and prosperity in African nations, I hope that Dr. Gomia’s

recommendations as expressed above are taken seriously. As a number of philosophers such as Richard Rorty and Paul Ricoeur have pointed out (in their different ways), literary narrative possesses a power to reach audiences and to advance social reforms far better than theoretical treatises that speak primarily to elite intellectual audiences. To allude to one of Rorty's examples, the "Coda" to Dickens' *Bleak House* did far more to institute social and economic reforms in 19th century England than did any social scientific treatise of the time or any philosophical argument of J. S. Mill's. If this notion of the "power of narrative" is sound, then it seems to me that Dr. Gomia's theses in this book warrant careful and serious consideration. While, as I have argued in my several publications on the philosophy of technology, technologies – including media technologies – are morally ambiguous (they can render disastrous as well as very positive results), it appears to me that the objectives of Development Theatre are toward sustaining community and enhancing democratization. In the context of current African political and cultural struggles, these appear to me to be very laudable objectives. I thus recommend both this work and its author.

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Introduction

Cameroonian Radio Theatre and African Radio Theatre in general are stakeholders in the business of enhancing Participatory Development. If radio theatre serves very generally as a medium of entertainment, it also serves relevantly as a theatre of conscientisation, for it digs into the everyday experiences of the common man whom Theatre for Development seeks to relocate from the periphery to the centre of development initiatives. Radio theatre provides insights into the usually hidden traditional and cultural structures of the communities thereby informing both the common man who is the would-be beneficiary of the development initiatives occasioned by Development Theatre and the high-tech expert and academic who are coming to terms with the capacity of the common man to contribute to his/her wellbeing. The relevance of high-tech expertise and Nobel-price type of literature in development issues is put to the test by the impact of radio drama.

In this respect, radio playwrights like Nora Elu Mumba in her *Kofi the Village Doctor*, and Victor Epie Ngome in his *The first Defence*, in tandem with the respective producers draw from local events to disseminate in artistic manner the peoples' feeling towards certain aspects of their society. These events constitute the breeding ground of socio-cultural phenomena from which the new mode of development initiatives, spearheaded by Development Theatre, draws extensively. The enactment thereof of the people's local realities re-animates local traditions and provokes critical thinking on issues facing the common man. In highlighting these local values, the playwrights and the producers take the audience to the stage where they generate and restore confidence in themselves and their potential to effect the needed change in their daily lives. This process of relocation puts to test the utilitarian value of 'literature of

combat¹ at the backdrop of a continent that is bleeding from the cycle of abject poverty. Radio drama is the veritable literature of combat because, in an all-inclusive manner, it seeks for social contention and relevance, thereby inviting the common man to self-inform on matters of social import.

This briefly is the thrust of this book that is divided into six chapters. The first chapter establishes the ideological premise of the claim while giving an insight into the factors that necessitate the emergence of Development Theatre in the African context and generally justifying the *raison d'être* of the rest of the study. Chapter Two outlines the theoretical basis and highlights the focus of available critical discourse on radio plays. In “Development Theatre as a New Theatre in Postcolonial Africa: Progress, Impediments and an Alternative Approach,” which is the focus of the third chapter, the form, content and general context of pre-colonial African theatre is explored. Attention is also given to the changes that obtained in the theatre during the colonial experience and the ultimate emergence of the New Theatre in the postcolonial setting. In this light, the potential and limitations of Development Theatre as a theatre of conscientisation in Africa is explored and radio drama proposed as a viable alternative. “Radio in Africa: A Gateway into Theatre for the Multitude” is the focus of the fourth chapter. It attempts to explore

¹ The drum-beating determination of some African writers to command attention to the plight of the people has come with, amongst other resounding rubrics, “Literature of combat” which is in turn corroborated by the (in)famous clichés that hinges on ‘not chasing the rat while the house is on fire’. For more than half a century, plenty of such literature has been written and much more has been said and written about it, while the continent remains at the edge. Literature of combat assumes a hierarchy of ‘texts’, conferring admission into a small coterie of scholars, most of who are of the University culture. With the backing of the academia, this class straddles between the establishment and the common man thereby according to itself a privileged space in the society’s culture. In addition to the controversy that shrouds the goal of literature of combat, it can be argued that it has failed to achieve its longstanding goal of establishing the desired social order in the African setting. There is therefore, a need to re-think the form and content of the kind of literature that would be all-embracing, all-inclusive and therefore functional.

the relationship between literature and the media, while defining the context of African Radio Theatre. It equally traces the beginnings of African broadcasting and how radio theatre became part of this debut that yielded offspring like the Guinness-Cameroon corpus which is, incidentally, the source of most of the primary material the book draws from. A survey on radio drama in two towns in Cameroon investigates the assumptions that inspired this work. Chapter Five is titled “Radio Theatre Aesthetics: Engineering Development Initiatives on the Air”. It explores the aesthetic relevance of radio drama and the peculiarity of the sub-genre. How key African radio playwrights have employed the peculiar radio aesthetics to significantly contribute towards the reanimation of local cultural traditions and render radio drama a functional art is pursued in this chapter. How functional would radio drama be is the pre-occupation in Chapter Six that is titled “Development Discourse in Selected Cameroon Anglophone Radio Plays”. Taking into consideration the key development strategies espoused by given popular education theorists, theatre practitioners and development resource persons, the chapter culls from 1978/1979 selected Guinness Cameroon corpus to demonstrate how, even if imperceptibly, radio drama would draw from the past and the present and how it seeks social contention and relevance. The “Conclusion” re-states the factors that justify the need for such a research endeavour and validates the stated hypothetical position that guides the study with suggestions on related fertile areas of research that could be explored. A postscript restates the highlights of the entire discourse for clarity.

List of Abbreviations

ACB – Agriculture Communication Branch
BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation
CABS – Central African Broadcasting Service
CRTV – Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation
DBU – Development Broadcasting Unit
DCR – Dzimwe Community Radio
FAMW – Federation of African Media Women – SADC
IMCHRD – Currently the Inter-ministerial Committee on Human Rights and Democracy
MBC – Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
MDG – Musinga Drama Group
NBC – Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation
NRDA – Northern Rhodesia Drama and Choir Association
ORTF – L'organisation Radio Diffusion-Television Francaise
RLC – Radio Listeners' Club
SABC – South African Broadcasting Corporation
TIDE – Theatre for Integrated Rural Development
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNZADRAM – University of Zambia Dramatic Society
URTNA – Union of the National Radio and TV Organisation of Africa
VOK – Voice of Kenya
WICO – Women's Information and Coordination Office
ZAT – Zambia Arts Trust
ZBC – Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation

Chapter One

Alternative Development Theatre

The question of the role of radio drama as an alternative approach to Development Theatre is the major ideological premise on which this book is based. Radio drama is drama that is written for production through the radio medium. It has its distinct characteristics from Drama that is written for the stage or for television. Unlike the former and the latter, radio drama is a medium of much more elastic possibilities. The elasticity of radio drama is enhanced by the fact that it generally always reaches far more people than either stage or television drama would. Because of this flexibility and the medium's capacity to tie-down a multitude audience, radio drama could serve very relevantly as an alternative approach to Development Theatre in the African setting.

Play-scripts of the Guinness-Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV) Literary Contest of 1978/1979 as well as selected productions from BBC, VOK, ZBC and SABC span Anglophone Africa and Commonwealth Literacy Studies of West, East and Southern African regions. Cameroon answers to being Africa in miniature and so Anglophone Cameroon radio drama gets central focus in this discourse. The communicative aspect of Development Theatre offers the opportunity for socio-political interaction amongst the different groupings within the community. It presents the avenue for horizontal and vertical interactions within the community and tends to facilitate the re-allocation of the dispossessed rural and urban poor in the African setting. Besides, it more or less corroborates the outlined objectives of mainstream Development Theatre, a concept whose birth and growth took centre stage in development-oriented discourses in the nineteen seventies.

As a concept, Development Theatre borders on the relevance of considering socio-cultural factors in development strategies. This strategy has become one of the main approaches in ensuring social

and economic development via cultural practice. The coming to the limelight of this approach is salutary because it comes at a time when it is increasingly evident that most initiatives from the centres (be they in the administrative capitals of developing countries or the metropolitan centres in the West) are not delivering the avowed goods of fostering development. Most of the initiatives rather pave the way for underdevelopment thereby fighting the poor instead of fighting poverty. This phenomenon explains, in part, the reasons why the African continent has remained poor and less developed despite the glittering promises of independence and globalisation.

The crises of the continent are reflected in a cross section of classes and groups. There is an army of school leavers without dignity and orientation among whom unemployment abounds. The new middle classes are caught between their indigenous values and western tastes. People in the rural areas are constantly drifting to the urban areas for want of basic needs, provisions and economic security that would neither be found in the abandoned peripheries nor in their new slump locations in the urban areas. Hansel N. Eyoh (1999, 100) captures the situation in reference to Cameroon as follows:

An erstwhile hard-working agricultural people have seen the prices of their products decline in the world market. Even when these prices were good, they hardly received fair compensation for their work. The product of their labours had been used to pay salaries of an effete bureaucracy or build prestigious projects like international airports dotted around the country... The toll of all this on the population is a debilitating drop in living standards. The poverty level is worsening everyday... Everywhere you find generalised dereliction. It is a scary picture of emptiness and waste... Houses are collapsing and there is no one to rebuild them. There is little hope of rejuvenation ... The masses are suffering but they cannot voice their frustrations. The

repressive machinery of government is expanding, both visibly and invisibly.....

Eyoh paints a picture of a society in decay with its albatross manifesting itself in exploitation, greed and corruption. Ali A. Mazrui (1990, 5) ascribes such a bewildering phenomenon to dependency theory by arguing that:

It is Africa's painful process of cultural westernisation without technical modernisation. Africa borrowed the wrong things from the West - even the wrong components of capitalism. We borrowed the profit motive but not the entrepreneurial spirit. We borrowed the acquisitive appetites of capitalism but not the creative risk-taking. We are at home with western gadgets but are bewildered by western workshops. We wear the wristwatch but refuse to watch it for the culture of punctuality. We have learnt to parade in display but not to drill in discipline. The west's consumption patterns have arrived, but not necessarily the west's technique of production.

What one can glean from Mazrui's argument is that such distortions ensure dependency relationship between Africa and the West, with the former being the dependent party and therefore disadvantaged. More people in Africa than ever are ringed by abject poverty, and there is very little effort at encouraging cultural re-animation, which is the beginning point of robust development initiatives.

Literature is one of the cultural factors that are instrumental to development in every society and at every time. Unfortunately, like every aspect of life on the African continent, creativity is not encouraged enough. Worst still, the reading culture is still not perceived as relevant to the majority of literate and semi-literate people alike. Illiteracy and the poor quality of formal education caused by economic recession curtail the reading habit of the people

more than five decades after independence. Wolfram Frommlet, (1991, 13) in a detailed and informed description of this anomaly captures its magnitude thus:

Half of Africa's population is under the age of 18. This very same half is being pushed back into illiteracy, a whole generation is growing up without books and hence without history, without the stories about their own society, without visions. It is ironical that now when the African continent is being shaken up by a second postcolonial phase of liberation, the enormous breadth of its literature which could provide what the people need in their search for identity, in a new process of self-awareness and discovery is not accessible to them. The majority of the people lack the educational skill and background which will enable them to read great African literature.

Frommlet's fear triggers a rethinking on how to make literature accessible and useful to the deteriorating circumstances that he joins Eyoh and Mazrui in exploring. At the same time, the context of the growth and development of African literature casts some doubt as to whether highbrow writing of the likes of Armah, Achebe and Butake (which out-rightly condemn corruption and moral decay in the society) and that of Ngugi, Soyinka and Bate Besong (which opt for a confrontational approach against social ills), would be useful in the light of revamping such an already lame culture.

Cameroon and Africa in general would boast of a reservoir of highbrow writing and critical publications on them. A cursory glance at the Cameroonian elite literary scene registers recognition of talents and an avalanche of literary works. In his ground-breaking book on the birth and evolution of Cameroonian literature titled *The African Quest for Freedom and Identity: Cameroonian Writing and the National Experience* (1991), Richard Bjornson explores the preoccupation of the Cameroonian writers, ranking Mongo Beti and Ferdinand Oyono as the country's best known novelists internationally. In the area of Drama, Bjornson, features Oyono Mbia and Sankie Maimo who

began writing way back in the fifties while Rene Philombe and Sengat Kuo rank among the best known Cameroonian poets. In *African Literature of french Expression: A Critical View from the British and American Spheres* (1982, 320) Mack George William states that Cameroonian writers are the pace-setters of African literature in French. He writes:

Critics of Western African literature, when speaking of...Cameroonian writers find them standing in the forefront of African protest literature, combining between them some of the most eloquent indictments against the colonial presence in the sub-Saharan, pre-independence Africa.

William adds his voice to that of Victor Aire who, like several other critics, sees in the works of Cameroonian writers a new school of realistic satirical works that were emerging from the impact of the colonial experience in Africa. To Aire in “A Panorama of the Francophone African Writing from the 1920s to the 1990s” in Oke Olusola and Ojo Ada (eds) *Introduction to Francophone African literature* (2000, 156) Cameroonian writers are militant satirists of the colonial experience. He states:

The satirists are mainly the Cameroonians..., who were part of the very first crop of writers of the post-war period....Mongo Beti who resorts less to satire than humour, is more profound in his criticism of colonialism... he describes the disorientation and the tribulations of the peasants in a colonial context...

Many more scholars have researched on Cameroonian writing and have through their appreciation erased any doubt about the country's literary productivity. Style - language, symbols, objects, metaphors and other devices - ties the literature down to stipulated canons imposed by the academia which renders it subject to “scientific” analysis. However, the result of such an analysis is much likely to be fluid, obvious and ephemeral because of the rules

imposed by the established distinction of elite writing that govern the process of appreciation. In other words, the issues raised by elite literature are often easily identified, and sometimes obliquely, because of the amount of brainstorming put on what could otherwise be practically recognised and appreciated.

That cultural imperialism has continued to render the idea of independence to Cameroon, and Africa as a whole, a farce has been subjected to much scholarly attention. According to Garrett (1998,2) scholars like Brantlinger, Edward Said, David Spur, Mary Pratt and Ali Mazrui have recurrently exposed the different phases of cultural imperialism and its manifestation. We cannot get tired of revisiting this mind-boggling reality. The penetration of African countries with images and values from the West alienates the continent further away from itself. Hollywood, Dallas, Dynasty or the new disco hits from the West are the centre of attention to the youths and the semi-literate adult population. According to Frommlet, (1993, 11) these are the major points of socialisation especially within the youthful population. At the same time one finds these same youths, who are the future of the continent, grow without knowledge of their own music, their own story, their own past. Africa has music, a story and a very rich past (in spite of its often haunting undertone) and present that has continued to feed scholarship and media. Garrett (ibid), after appreciating the scholars for their ‘valuable works on colonial and imperialistic appropriation of native cultures’ expresses regret at the fact that “much remains to be done about those cultures themselves, for they are not given adequate attention” (26).

The elite literature has as an audience the few in University milieus. It has its unquestionable place in the process of salutary cultural engineering. Nevertheless, popular literature, or the people’s literature like in Radio Theatre would usher a more ground-breaking impact in the process of building a national value in a society with an alarming low level of literacy. We find a significant positive impact in Nigeria’s Onitsha Market Literature whose impact on the people’s identity is increasingly pulling attention not only within its semi-literate targeted audience but among scholars around the world.

The various conferences and colloquia organised in the 1970s in Cameroon to discuss, evaluate and seek ways of improving literary production in Cameroon paid little or no attention to popular literature. As we have seen, the intellectual class tends to dismiss popular literature but ironically feels that the semi-literate and illiterate masses should be involved in the process of constructing a national culture. This class has taken popular literature to the dock at the court of literary appreciation as a defendant, subjects it to thorough scrutiny, pronounces it guilty and sentences it indefinitely to the category of “inferior culture.” There have neither been enough findings nor an open trial. Because the accused has not raised a finger of protest, the claimant, for fear of the unknown, almost always finds the need to defend his action.

Without the veneer of sophisticated canons that the elite create for its literature a competition in an open marketplace for evaluation and reward would find elite literature wanting in the Cameroonian context. It is perfectly clear that given freedom of choice the public will choose their own ‘classics’, ‘serious’ and ‘worthwhile’ or “useful” literature.” Popular literature gains most of its strength from spontaneity and freedom from stipulated canons. It is constantly innovating in its free style and subject matter. New approaches are made to points of view without reservation. In other words, popular literature experiments by extending the frontiers of its subject matter and its style. It digs into unsuspected areas which usually harbour the roots of the chaos that man grapples with. It therefore, in a sense, has more capacity to liberate a people than elite literature does.

The path carved out for the cultivation of national culture by Philombe, Fonlon and some Cameroonian intellectuals advocate for literary productivity that frees itself from limited angles of vision both in subject matter and style. It is not clear if by expressing such thinking any of the Western-educated scholars had in mind popular literature or not. What is clear however is that they state a clear case for literature that appeals to the masses. When Fonlon (1982, 76) in particular expresses regret at the fact that cultural initiative is left in the hands of the “Western-educated few”, he is stating the need for

popular culture. For a country with the majority of its people either semi-literate or not literate at all, “cultural initiative” that would be genuinely useful for developing a national culture can only be meaningful through popular literature.

Incidentally, the colloquia of the 1970s never did much in the light of popular literature although the conferees were aware of the truism that literature that emanates from and speaks directly to the masses was germane for national consciousness. ABBIA in all its publications from 1963 to 1982 never paid attention to even a single article on popular culture. We therefore have a situation where scholars preach cultural engineering that springs from the masses through a medium that dichotomises them from the same masses seeking to get involved in the process of nation-building. Within this circumstance, films, pulp fiction, music and other values from abroad attract tremendous crowds across the country to the detriment of indigenous values.

The argument here is not for water-tide attention to local culture. After all, culture is by nature an evolving phenomenon and any circumstance that stops its mutation renders it unproductive, especially in an increasingly interconnected world. Wa Thiongo (1997) militantly suggests a phenomenon of moving the centre from the metropolitan West, not to a different location but creating multiplicity of centres around the globe. Without this, he warns:

Cultures that stay in total isolation from others... shrivel, dry up or wither away. Cultures under total domination from others can be crippled, deformed, or else die. Cultures that change to reflect the ever-changing dynamics of internal relations and which maintain a balanced give and take with external relations are the ones that are healthy.

The argument is for the recognition of the invaluable role popular culture plays towards the building of a national culture especially in settings like Cameroon where the elite class is bent on maintaining the status quo. One of the pillars of modern writing, T. S

Eliot recognises the power of popular literature when he hesitantly states: “I incline to come to the alarming conclusion that it is just the literature that we read for ‘amusement’ or ‘purely for pleasure’ that may have the greatest ...least suspected...earliest and most insidious influence upon us.”¹ That a commanding voice in modern writing with the calibre of T. S Eliot, should come to such an ‘alarming conclusion’ should be enough reason for a shift of focus in the functional role of literary scholarship. It would have been enough reason to start paying attention to the masses as the primary audience for literature that would be functional.

One of the reasons advanced for the inferior position accorded popular literature is that it is “low” and “ordinary” in both the subjects it treats and the manner it treats such subjects. (Obiechina 1972, Lewis 1981, Hall, 1992, Landon, 2000 and Tim, 2002). This is a bewildering anomaly, especially if one thinks of the main feature that identifies a powerful literary movement in English history like Romanticism.² Nevertheless, popular literature is neither ordinary nor low. On the contrary, it presents a much more difficult task for the reader, especially he/she who belongs to the elite class. When such a reader finds the issues raised in a popular piece “not crucial” and “less obvious” he hastily dismisses it and goes for a more “sophisticated” piece that suits the demands of the hierarchy to which he belongs. To expantiate on this, we will take a critical look at two critics. The first is reacting to an elite piece of writing and the second on a popular piece of writing-

1: Ambanasom (1993, 94) writes on Bate Besong’s plays:

Coming to Bate Besong’s plays, we are in the presence of the most modernist of all Cameroonian creative writers of English expression. Whether one is talking of his theatre or his poetry,

¹ See Kay Browne in “Redefining Literature” in *Journal of Popular culture* no.23, 1990, 103

² One of the main characteristics of Romantic poetry is simplicity in both style and subject matter. Almost all the romantic poets, especially the Radical Romantics like Worthsworth and Shelley carved out a different phase of literary history from the erstwhile neo-classics.

Besong has demonstrated more than anyone else that he has mastered the modernist mode of discourse. Indeed one would think that Bate Besong came straight into imaginative writing as though the conventional mode of writing had never existed...his plots are akin to Samuel Becket's...he provides us with an admixture of the realistic, the historical, the tragic, the comic, all of this underlying a particular political ideology. He makes for difficult reading because of his abstruse style and rather adventurous use of dramatic technique, but this is what makes him compulsive as we strive to discover his "style de guerre"

2: Obiechina (1972, 24) writes on "Onitsha Pamphlets":

It is not suggested that the attitude of the Onitsha Pamphleteers derives from a doctrinal basis as consistent and clearly defined as that of the English eighteenth-century Puritan pamphlets...Their general attitude is more practical and more uncomplicated...the popular pamphleteers welcome the opportunities in a society which leaves the door open for the individual to get in. Their tales are full of instances of those who started life at the bottom and pulled themselves up to lofty heights and success. In most of their novelettes, everybody has a recognised and named trade or profession...the pamphlet writers have different techniques for putting across their...lessons. A writer may adopt the preaching technique, in the nature of tracts for the time...

The first quotation is a fine exposition of what elite literature requires by way of appreciation. Any elite-schooled mind would find some formula in the same direction in analysing Besong's works. The issues raised in the works are obvious, provided one has been trained on how to employ the canons of analysis. The second quotation, on the other hand, presents a much more difficult task to the critic, especially if he/she has been trained in the elite canons. There the subject matter, style and themes are "less crucial" and "down to earth." The elite critic presumes that they do not exist and shoves the work by the wave of the hand. Cohn (1990, 17) posits that a prudent reader of "low literature" would find the worth of the work because the issues raised are more on the path of practical everyday

generalities. The pamphlets do not focus on the “burning issues of the day” but on the root cause of such issues and its dynamics. The issues raised in the pamphlets, as in most popular writing, are assumed, and in that way they are more nearly universal in the flow of generalities and accepted truths to the masses. Popular writing is the voice of those masses that elite literature presumes it is its mouthpiece. Browne (1990, 14) reveals the double standard orchestrated by the elite class:

It is one of the more amusing yet aggravating paradoxes of modern academia that even those academics who rail loudest against the dangers of popular literature are avid readers of such literature; but they read on the sly, often ashamed to admit their practices

The relevance of this for Cameroonian or African literary culture stems from the evidence that elite literature has not registered the long-awaited success associated with its function. Other disciplines are adjusting in focus and preoccupation with changes in the reality of things in the world. Scientists, for example, have abandoned hitherto assumed generalities while social scientists are discovering new orders in their micro worlds as they investigate hitherto assumed orders. What is true of the physical and social world is likewise true of the humanities and of literature in particular. With this in mind there is justification for focus in popular literature, and radio theatre offers a vital area of exploitation in this regard.

It is within the backdrop of the aforementioned void and doubt in the breeding ground of African culture that Development Theatre in general finds a fertile ground, inviting the writer/critic to a relatively newer and more innovating universe of discourse. If highbrow theatre/literature generally embraces the embroidered diction of metaphors, allegories, imagery, irony and the symbolic quality of creativity, Development Theatre generally defies this embroidered diction. The latter opts for intervention and action that takes sides with the disempowered masses right from its conception.

It sets out to empower the powerless, involves active participation of the concerned, and of necessity pulls them together. This way, it raises them from mere objects of political action to full-fledged participants in the process of constructing and re-constructing their destiny. Development Theatre explores the political and artistic potentials of the common man for his/her good. The common man is at the centre of action on stage, during which he identifies and re-defines his basic needs. The communal participation occasioned by Development Theatre creates a forum for the appreciation of views that have been relegated to the background since independence in Africa. It reconsiders and takes into consideration the old culture issue, thereby creating the culture of dialogue that sees development as a process and not an imposition by the political or intellectual elite within or without the developing country. In this way, both the political and intellectual elite would recognise the political and creative potential that the people at the grassroots possess.

Operating against the background of deprivation, disease, hunger and poverty, Development Theatre is not complacent but catalyses issues by way of altering and reshaping ways of thinking and perception. It is a fertile ground for triggering action and change. It does not restrict itself, like art theatre, by simply reflecting the society and theorising on changes in the society. Rather, it is dedicated to mediating society by engaging in critical intervention. In effect, it is an exercise that seeks for action and solution. This presupposes that Development Theatre is a socio-political artistic force, different from theatre as pure entertainment. Though referring to literature in general, Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1972, xi) throws some light on what functional art is, and this we find same with Development Theatre practice. Ngugi pointedly informs us that literature is not produced in a vacuum, but

. . . is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa,

where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism.

By its very nature, Development Theatre encompasses a broad range of dramatic practices from plays that set out to conscientise the audience to those that serve as preludes to given developmental projects. The Musinga Drama Group,³ popularly known by its acronym, MDG, was founded in 1974 by a Cameroonian popular playwright, Victor Elame Musinga. The group produced plays that aimed at conscientising the audience. Amongst the first to be produced by the Musinga group features Victor Elame Musinga's *The Tragedy of Mr. No balance* (1966) and *The Trials of Ngowo* (1973). While the former combines the comical and the serious in portraying the modern Cameroonian society, the latter explores the repercussions of betrothal of girls at birth to old men.

On the other hand, the Kumba workshop on Theatre for Development, initiated by Ndumbe Eyoh in 1984⁴, is an example of theatre that precedes or triggers obvious developmental initiatives. The workshop aimed at (amongst other things) initiating development experts and rural communities in the practice of theatre for mobilisation. The workshop demonstrated that Development Theatre is a viable medium for conscientisation and mobilisation for action.

If the workshop resulted in the mobilisation of the local inhabitants to the launching of contributions for the construction of a bridge that would replace a hammock, the Musinga Drama Group

³ For more on the Musinga Drama Group read Stephen Arnold's essay "Comparative View" and Michael

Kelly's Essay "Taking Pidgin Seriously" in Lemuel Johnson et al (eds) 53 – 71, and ABBIA 1978, 31 – 33 respectively.

⁴ For more on the Kumba workshop on Theatre for Integrated Rural development see Eyoh, H. Ndumbe in

Hammocks to Bridges: Report of the Workshop on Theatre for Integrated Rural Development. Yaounde: BET And Co, 1986.

re-animated local cultural traditions within its different Anglophone Cameroonian audiences, an exercise whose relevance in developmental initiatives cannot be over-emphasised.

This broad range of forms and features in Development Theatre has caught the attention of the German scholar, Eckhard Breitingner,⁵ who opines that it entails a correspondingly wide variety of different representational styles. Breitingner (1990, 96), in an insightful essay, explains the different modes and facets of Development Theatre:

Development Theatre covers a wide spectrum of dramatic and proto-dramatic activities, ranging from plays that very generally try to awaken and shape political awareness, that is, plays of “conscientisation” to project oriented plays, in which one self-help project is enacted in the form of role-playing – development theatre as prelude to project management. It encompasses plays that are part, and intentionally so, of the corpus of art theatre as well as simple and unsophisticated amateur theatre; it covers government-sponsored political propaganda plays as well as traditional festival theatre and related forms.

Moreover, different forms of Development Theatre are based on very different structures both in terms of organisational and communicative strategies. The mainstream agenda of Development Theatre, however, remains the same: to make available a different way through which the marginalised or the powerless poor in the rural and urban areas address their fears and hopes in a free and democratic manner. Development theatre is therefore, in a sense, a forum for the struggle for democracy.

Development Theatre has not brought a cure-all healing strategy to the multiple wounds of the masses in Africa and the third world as a whole, and this constitutes the main problem that inspires this

⁵ Employing the Ugandan example, Eckhard Breitingner has offered a comprehensive analysis of Development Theatre in Africa in “Agitprop for a Better World: Development Theatre: A political Grassroots Theatre Movement” in Raoul Granqvist (ed) *Signs and Signals: Popular culture in Africa*. Umea: Umea University Press, 1990, 96.

book. As appealing as it is with its in-side-out approach to development strategy, it comes with some drawbacks which Kidds, Kerr and Eyoh⁶ attempt to explain and which is explored in the next chapter. What Development Theatre achieves is that it attempts to give a voice to hitherto subdued masses in the continent. More popular amongst the numerous examples in different countries in Africa are: The Laedza Batanani in Botswana, The Amadu Bello University experiments in Nigeria, and the Kamiriithu example in Kenya (in which Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Ngugi Wa Miri were deeply involved and which impacted tremendously on the masses, though the popularity of the exercise became distasteful to the Moi government). Worth mentioning also is the Murewa experiment in Zimbabwe carried out in 1983. It was from the latter that Eyoh (1999, 110) got inspired to initiate another workshop in Kumba, Cameroon, in 1984. The Kumba workshop serves as a vital experimentation as it brings to the limelight the potential and limitations of development Theatre in the African setting a decade after the practice began in Botswana. Anglophone Cameroonian frontline playwright, Bole Butake (1986, 196) who actively participated in the workshop, assesses its impact:

The process of theatre for integrated rural development, if pursued through follow-up, will definitely give the rural masses of Konye area not only a new sense of direction but more so, a *raison d'être* for living. The animosity, lethargy and apathy that we found in Konye at the beginning of the workshop are not peculiar to Konye. Lethargy and apathy are not features of the rural masses only. Even in cities and urban centres in Africa particularly, and the third world in general, the labouring masses are notorious for their helplessness, indifference and lack of concern for their predicament.

⁶ In a 1999 paper entitled "Popular Theatre Re-visited: With an Additional Bibliography on Popular Theatre and Theatre for Development", in Anne Fuchs (ed) *New Theatre in Francophone and Anglophone Africa*, Eyoh adopts a questioning tone as he draws from Ross Kidds, David Kerr and his visit to Kumba a decade after 'The Kumba Workshop' to find the limitations of Development Theatre in alleviating poverty at the periphery.

By giving a voice to the dispossessed as obtained during the 1983 and 1984 workshops, popular theatre brings people into close contact with one another. Moreover, as they address issues during workshops, the participants live problems that they are familiar with in a more down-to-earth and collective manner. The participants make use of prevailing performance forms like music, dance, puppetry and mime which are familiar to the people. This is geared at eliminating alienation and validating cultural mutation in accordance with local realities.

Radio Theatre is to be considered as an aspect of Development Theatre. It is unique and serves as a viable corroboration to Development Theatre. It is a sub-genre to which critics have accorded a marginal attention over the years (see, for example, Peter Lewis in *Radio Drama*, 1981, 66). Nevertheless, it plays a particularly relevant role by way of generally triggering and shaping social, cultural and political awareness. This way, it ‘conscientises’ the masses in a manner expounded by Paolo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000). The advantages accruing from the radio medium are numerous. People generally listen more than they read, given that the latter demands a deliberate, cautious and often strenuous effort, while the former requires a mere decision to listen (actively or passively) to what is being broadcast. Besides, African culture is basically oral. Radio carries over this essentially oral culture from the evening firesides and staged or a live performances to the privacy of individual homes and public places. Moreover, the proliferation of FM stations in most African countries in recent years does not match with the proliferation of libraries and bookshops or Television houses. As Frommlet (1991, 13) has pointed out, the reading habit of Africans is rather ebbing out at its infancy. Radio then would be the meaningful medium to inform, entertain and educate the people. In so doing, this medium would also be seen as implanting relevant developmental concepts, especially through radio drama.

Narrowing down to the specific frame of reference here, Cameroonian Radio Theatre is a stakeholder in the business of

enhancing Participatory Development. Radio drama does not necessitate the physical coming together of people like the mode of Development Theatre that precedes project implementation and mainstream art. Nevertheless, it serves as an alternative approach to Development Theatre, despite the hurdles faced at the different phases of production by writers and producers in the African context, problems such as lack of incentives and the stigma attached to it by the proponents of 'belle lettres'. When people are propelled to discuss their problems and seek ways of change by collective action, they are engaged in a theatre of conscientisation; in other words, they are involved in a theatre of struggle. To Ross Kidds (1979, 268) this is the process that will restore confidence in the common man thereby re-energising him/her.

A radio play would initiate discussions by the listeners that almost always culminate at some form of awareness of crucial everyday challenges. The ripple effect on the community as a whole may not only restore the waning confidence of this audience but may generate the desire for social action that should affect power relations in the society.

Radio theatre is part of the broader concept of development communication, a concept whose brief exploration would shed more light on the relevance of the subject. Nora Quebral (1989, 2) argues that development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that ensures greater social equality and the larger fulfilment of the human potential. Quebral's statement is apt when we perceive development communication as the employment of art and science of communication amongst humans with the intention of persuading a particular segment of the community to change their habits, lifestyle, or ways of thought to make possible more sophisticated states of consciousness.

Yet it could be argued that the practice of cajoling certain segments of the human society to effect drastic changes in its perception is not novel. This is essentially what public relations,

advertisement and propaganda are all about; it is largely the subjective potential of persuasive communication that has rendered the practice subject to suspicion. That said, development communication is largely different because of its leitmotif and the context of its action. In other words, what gives development communication uniqueness is its set purpose. Whereas advertising, public relations and propaganda are rooted in Western culture where they took roots in response to the needs of the setting, development communication is essentially a developing country issue. As a largely third world thing with the potential of empowering hitherto alienated peoples, development communication offers fertile ground for dynamizing development initiatives. This is more obvious when we see development communication as a means of advancing development. Development in itself would mean that the poor masses in the society with their very low rate of literacy in addition to the stigma emanating from it are informed and energized to accept and utilise a huge body of ideas and know-how, which they did not have before, in a faster pace than they would normally have. This is what development communication sets out to do, while sensitizing and energizing at different levels of the society. Given these attributes, development communication is *de facto* development.

Like other innovations in the social sciences, development communication is not a material object that would be readily seen in concrete terms; it is essentially a concept or an idea that would not be easy to appreciate until such a time that one finds it being translated into action. In an intriguing twist, development communication in Africa is a tool not for the targeted beneficiaries of development but for governments, policy makers and experts. Because these groups of people could be as resistant to change as the targeted beneficiaries of development, the first thing a development communicator does is to bring them to his or her side.

Development Theatre practitioners in general and radio-play writers and producers in particular are development communicators in their own rights. The concept of development communication enters and evolves within this maxim. As with radio play, motivation

is a vital element in development communication. The success of a good radio play depends not so much on the information being disseminated than on the motivation the audience has in listening to the play and acting on it to better their lives as individuals and as communities. This is very true for the primary audience of largely uninformed and unsophisticated audiences. Juan Jamias (1994, 135) attempts a distinction between development communication and advertisement as follows:

To explain development communication a bit more, let us first establish what it is not. It is not publicity per se, or getting the maximum media exposure for something or someone for the sake of image-building. The development communicator may use the same media as the publicist does, but his aim is to stimulate public awareness and understanding of planned change, and of the agency that is promoting it, so as to create a climate of acceptance under which that agency can do its appointed work. It is not mass communication alone. It will use any and all communication channels that will achieve its goals. The channel may be an entire extension service serving a population sector, the low-keyed and casual conversation within a family, a demonstration plot, a course curriculum, a stage play. Many times the mediated channels only repeat or re-enforce the spoken word. It is no more than a slide set, a leaflet or a seminar. It is basically an approach or point of view that sizes up a problem in the light of people to be reached and of overcoming or side-stepping the barriers in the way of reaching them. It is audience-oriented, its main target being rural and farm folks whose characteristics point to an affinity with oral and pictorial communication. It is not non-purposive chronicling of facts. It is communicating with the intent of promoting development in all aspects and at all levels...

The water-tide distinction Jamias tries to articulate is not convincing enough, for like advertising, development communication

aims at influencing and cajoling. In effect, the field of advertisement has been explored enough to have informed trends and factors that development communication would benefit from. The major distinction between the two is that development communication does not sell just a single product at a particular time. Development communication simultaneously embraces numerous things; it has the potential to draw from the social and cultural background in initiating ideal processes of dynamising society as demanded by mainstream development theatre. Like development theatre, development communication would be used to inform the common man on matters of social and economic import. It is this man/woman in the street who ensures the spirit of national cohesion initiated and encouraged by the government. Therefore, while the government does the groundwork for progress and development in the society, the common man must feel and live the ensuring social changes. Development communication would be very useful in this regard in a number of ways; such ways have been clinically identifies by Quebral (1982, 05):

Assuming our democratic political framework, persuasive communication then becomes terribly important. Government must convince all of us that the task is worth making sacrifices for, and one way of doing it is by keeping before our eyes the goals, mechanics and progress of development. Development planners who contemplate the awesome task of lifting a nation by its bootstraps may muse on the merits of a more authoritarian form of government that can cut through indifference, sloth and indecision. They merely indulge in wishful thinking, however, for our history and accumulated values have already set our political course for us. There is no other recourse for a democratic government that sincerely wants development except to inform and motivate the citizenry, and thereby mobilize the popular commitment that it must have. I might add parenthetically that this is true as well for an agricultural college or agency of any other human organization. Assuming, too, the free enterprise nature of our communication system, Government has no other recourse except to co-opt privately owned media to carry the

bulk of its development message to all corners of the nation. Here lies the ostensible reason for the tug of war between government and our professional communicators. The more analytical of the latter have begun to block out the terms under which a rapprochement is possible.

In addition to these would be a government devoted to social and economic development and a press even much more committed to social and economic development. This would not be easy. Change, especially in the developing setting like that of most African countries, would be a daunting task. The context in which African media operate is different from the largely liberal democratic Western world that preaches and practises freedom of the press and free market to an appreciable extent. It is within this broader context of development communication that Radio Theatre enters and evolves as an invaluable tool in fostering development via mass communication.



*Sixty-year-old farmer and resident of Nanga Eboko, Cameroon's South Region, admits receiving life-changing information from listening to radio.
Courtesy: Farm Radio International*

Chapter Two

Theoretical Basis and Critical Focus

The problems of adapting existing critical vocabulary to the distinctive artistic characteristics of radio drama partly account for the marginal position accorded the sub-genre by scholarship. In recent years there has been an enormous output of criticism on modern stage drama, but there has been very little informed discourse on radio drama, in spite of the upsurge in the production of good radio drama. These anomalies pre-occupied the conferees on radio literature at the University of Durharm in 1977. At the conference many participants were pre-occupied with some of the distinguishing characteristics of radio drama; a genre that Peter Lewis (1979, 4) advises, “should be treated as a modern extension of the whole tradition of literature and not something outside it, belonging to the media and so not of great interest to the literary scholar and critic.” This notwithstanding, the sub-genre has been of interest to a considerable number of radio theatre scholars like Arch Oboler, Louis MacNiece, Peter Lewis, John Drakakis, Francis Gray, Wole Soyinka and David Kerr. These and existing critical theories inspired by New Historicists, such as Bertold Brecht, Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal, Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher define the perspective of inquiry employed herein.

In “The Problems of Teaching Radio Drama”, Louis Macneice (1977, 28), argues that because broadcasting relies on ‘sound and sound alone’ what will be required of a good script will not necessarily be commensurate to the requirements of a good radio play. MacNiece goes on to state that the playwright “has to lay aside some of his technical equipment; however, provided his piece is well produced, he can count on his words regaining those literary virtues which literature itself has lost since it has been divorced from the voice”. He is obviously preoccupied with the problems of the writer, though the issues raised also help to highlight the problems of the

critic who has to reach beyond script to analysing the voice-over that obtains from the script during production. The voice-over is primordial in radio drama, as the play remains incomplete until it is listened to. The act of listening, therefore, is vital for the success of radio drama production.

It is definitely not by chance that the dramatic of Shakespeare's *Othello* is constructed around a poison that is administered through the ear. The ear is perhaps the most intimate of the sense organs (Gray, 1977). Heard information is stored in the darkness of the head and is likely to lurk there for a longer period of time than what is seen. Cook Tim (1999, 3) challenges the assumed hierarchy of the senses by stating that "We begin to hear before we are born. We develop a continuous and luxurious bath sound: the song of our mother's voice, the swash of her breathing, the trumpeting of her intestines, the timpani of her heart!." David Burrows (1996, 16) poses a similar challenge when he intimates that "An unborn child may be startled at a sound of a door slamming shut. The rich warm cacophony of the womb has been recorded: mothers' heartbeat and breathing are among the earliest indications babies have of the existence of the world beyond their skin." Tim and Burrow thus argue that the human being first hears before he sees. They have explained in the world of physiology what MacNiece explains in the world of radio drama, for the ability to hear what one says or to listen to it is primordial in perception. In Radio theatre, it is the 'darkness of the head' that constitutes the stage which sometimes gives images to the audience that could be more real than those of stage drama, in spite of the generally assumed advantages of the latter over the former.

Francis Gray in "The Impacted Man" (Lewis Peter ed. 1977) posits that the radio stage is darkness and silence on which the radio dramatist and his producer and/or actors can create all the theatrical paraphernalia. This 'stage' according to Slackville West in "Understanding a Radio Play" (Lewis Peter (ed), 1976, 221), is "susceptible of carrying far more degree of dramatisation than the stage or the screen because of the extreme flexibility of the medium

and its wide powers of imaginative suggestions.” It is on this ‘dark stage’ that Irving Stone states in “On Reading a Radio Play” (1960, xi) that “the wall of the room will be pushed back, the walls of the house will disappear, the mind and senses of the audience will be free in the vast areas of time and space to go wherever the radio play wishes to take them.”

It is evident that both MacNiece’s elaboration on the construction and Sackville’s plea for caution on the highly flexible medium for maximum output underlie the relevance of form and development. According to Gray, the action of radio drama goes on in the head of the individual. The sub-genre is therefore drama of the imagination in which the listener takes an active part in the creative process since he must create the characters, the décor and the costume in his mind’s eyes. Gray is perhaps too lenient to the radio playwright. Stone (1960, iv), in his detailed and informed essay titled “On Reading a Radio Play”, fiercely argues that radio drama is perhaps the only art form in which the creator becomes the ‘suggestor’ while the audience does the ‘actual creating’. To Stone therefore, creativity in radio theatre in itself is a participatory exercise in which the writer/actor and the listener/audience take full responsibility in the process of realising a play.

What obtains when these paradigms are transplanted into the African setting should be of interest. Although MacNiece, Slackville West, Gray and Stone base their arguments on the British and American foundation radio theatre, respective interests and projects differ fundamentally. This is not to deny that radio drama has distinct universal characteristics. However, unlike the British and American experiences where radio theatre served the ideological interest of the middle classes, the project in Africa tends to subvert rather than affirm the ideological interests of the middle classes. This is primarily so because of the elitist nature of art theatre and the obvious paradox that emanates from most writers’ very elitist and middle class status position in the African context. The African mind harbours fertile space for the enactment of radio drama that draws extensively from local colour as the plays analysed in this study do. By ‘taking part in

the creative process', the African audience finds radio useful for the restoration of faith in their creativity, spontaneity, and ability to think since he/she is, an actor on the stage that is his/her immediate community. These notwithstanding, we will consider that radio drama is literary art produced within a given context and time. The 'initiator' who scripts the play and the audience that (according to Gray and Stone) does the actual 'creativity' act within a continuum that is subject to mainstream literary critical paradigms.

In their articulations, radio drama theorists tend to corroborate one of the most prominent figures in twentieth century theatre, Bertolt Brecht (1964). German poet, playwright and theatrical reformer, Brecht is pre-occupied with encouraging audiences to think critically rather than become deeply involved in the story and identify with the characters. In his 'Epic Theatre' (a clearly avant-garde theatre of his time)⁷, Brecht contends that in order to effect change in the society the artist should leave the down-town stage for the neighbourhood, because that is where he would find the people who are genuinely interested in changing the degrading social order en vogue. His argument here is that focusing on the down-town theatre is attempting to change the changers of society, an exercise that does not establish 'equilibrium'. In *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (1964, 14), he asserts:

The one tribute we can pay the audience is to treat it as thoroughly intelligent. It is utterly wrong to treat people as simpletons when they are grown ups. I appeal to the reason of the sort of people who just come for fun and don't hesitate to keep their hats on in the theatre...I give the incidents boldly so that the audience can think for itself.

⁷ Based essentially on Marxist ideals, Epic Theatre focused on bringing to light social issues regarding the working class. The movement was strongly influenced by expressionism and Germany's *Neue Sachlichkeit* (German neo-realism). The term "epic theatre" was coined by Bertolt Brecht to contrast the style of theatre he advocated with Wagner's Aristotelian or "dramatic" theatre

Regretting that contemporary theatre is blurred by the actor playing to the audience's heart, Brecht opines that theatre should represent a forum for debate (where both the actor and the audience find space on stage for acting and engaging in dialogics) rather than a place for illusions. He proposes a land-mark alternative to the Stanislavsky-oriented realism that dominates acting and the 'good play' construction dominant in play-writing. Brecht believed that theatre should not appeal to the spectator's feelings but to his reason, and that besides providing entertainment, theatre should be strongly didactic and capable of provoking social change in the society. In the theatre of illusion, he argues, the spectator tends to identify with the characters on stage and becomes emotionally involved with the characters rather than stirred to think about his own challenges in life. To encourage the audience to adopt a more critical attitude to what is happening on stage; Brecht develops his "Verfremdungseffekt" (alienation effect) in which the anti-illusive techniques are employed to remind the spectators that they are in a theatre watching an enactment of reality as lived in their everyday lives. This amounts to a process of thinking together and dynamizing spectators instead of just giving them a show. Unlike the dogmatic theatre that tells people what to do, this mode asks them what they want. More importantly, this is a kind of theatre that helps people to learn how to fight back against oppression in their daily lives. Brecht therefore, expounds a kind of popular theatre for, of and by the people for whom the struggle for liberation and emancipation is a moral obligation.

These concepts of liberation and emancipation underscore the cycles of domination present in the African setting. They are reminiscent of Hegelian dialectics⁸ which Frantz Fanon perceives as

⁸ In *Phenomenology of the spirit* (1807), Hegel codifies the complicated mechanisms in which disparate, seemingly antithetical or contradictory ideas can be arranged into dialogue or conversation with each other by means of their 'dialectic' juxtaposition. The Hegelian dialectic suggests a coherence between thesis and anti-thesis, concrete and abstract, master and slave, part and whole and subject and object

not applicable in the African context. Hegel charges that the master or subject is a consciousness that defines itself only by the mutual relation to the slave or object. The Master or the subject is therefore not an independent consciousness but a dependent consciousness that relies on the slave or the object. Fanon takes issue with this by stating that the dialectic underestimates the white master's domineering attitude over the black slave in postcolonial Africa. This, among others, is the concept that provoked Frantz Fanon's revolutionary ambitions, and his contribution to the understanding of the African dilemma is crucial to the theoretical consideration in this book.

Still in the light of establishing a common stage for both the actor and the audience, Frantz Fanon argues that an entirely new world must come into being. In *The Wretched of the earth* 1961, he develops the Manichean perspective that is implicit in *Black Skin white Mask* (1968). This perspective is to overcome the binary system in which white is good and black bad. For such a utopian desire to be completely free of the past requires total revolution, "absolute revolution" (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 37). Reminiscing Brecht who is not for the proletariat coming to power, Fanon opts for violence that purifies, and by purifying destroys not only the category of white or master but also the category of black slave too. Therefore, like Brecht who recommends the taking of theatre from the city centre to the country side, Fanon asserts that true revolution in Africa can only come from the peasants, or "fellaheen." This focus on the rural underclass highlights Fanon's disgust with the ways in which intellectual leaders often betray the national working class. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961, 149) Fanon states:

The national middle class who takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped middle class. It has practically no economic power, and in any case, it is in no way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hopes to replace. In its narcissism, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can

advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country. But that same independence which literally drives it into a corner will give rise within its ranks to catastrophic reactions, and will oblige it to send out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country.

It is this ‘underdeveloped bourgeoisie’ that Fanon shoves aside and brings the peasants to the fold. In his faith in the African peasantry or objects, Fanon anticipates the emergence in the mid nineteen seventies of Theatre for Development which finds vested revolutionary artistic power among the dispossessed peasants at the periphery. It is this recognition of the subject/object dichotomy and its consequential effects on the latter that led, invariably, to Paolo Freire’s radical rejection of a class-based society in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993).

Freire’s lived experiences with the poor of his native Brazil inspired a type of interactive theatre that is rooted in the belief that the audience or the oppressed has the latitude to liberate not only itself but the oppressor as well. Like Fanon, Freire restores plenty of confidence to the ability of the oppressed to act on stage and critically examine his condition in the manner earlier chronicled by Brecht and expounded by Development Theatre. This, in spite of the imposed ‘culture of silence’ he/she is cabined in essentially (and not exclusively) by the medium of communication. Freire underscores the ability of the oppressed in *Pedagogy*: (1993, 33)

No matter how ignorant or submerged in the ‘culture of silence’ he or she may be, is capable of looking critically at the world with a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools for such encounter, the individual can gradually perceive personal and social reality as well as the contradiction in it, become conscious of his or her own perception of that reality and deal critically. In this process the old paternalistic teacher-student relationship is overcome. A peasant can facilitate this process for a neighbour more effectively than a “teacher” brought in from outside.

Freire's inciting critique of the dominant banking model of education (which in Brechtian thinking establishes a gulf between the actor and the audience) paves the way for his democratic proposal of problem-posing education where the hitherto neglected peasants (or objects) develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist. In this way, the mystical gulf between the subject and the object is demystified, thereby creating a fertile environment in which new power relationships thrive. These new power relationships establish mechanisms of collective power over all the structures of the society. This type of interactive theatre is the breeding ground of Augusto Boal's experimentation in the field.

Boal initiated forums in South America and the United States for the practice, performance and dissemination of the techniques of the theatre of the oppressed which he articulates in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979). The issues directly addressed by Boal in his experimentations are those that underlie the very process of organising democratic social change: the way people conceive of specific problems and how they find themselves within such problems, how they interact with others, and how they organise to come to similar solutions to their plight. Just like Freire's primary goal of popular education sets out to change power relations in an oppressive setting, so too the principal Goal of Boal is to help groups, within the context of liberal learning process, face and transform power relations of domination and subjugation that generate oppression. In this learning process, Boal (1979, 66) states:

All participants are learners; all participate in and contribute equally to the production of knowledge, which is a continuous dialogue; the learners are the subject and not the object of the process; the objective of the process is to liberate participants from both internal and external oppression, so as to make them capable of changing their reality, their lives and the society they live in.

This is participatory theatre at its very best. It emphasises democratic and cooperative forms of interaction among participants. It is presented not as spectacle but as action designed to analyse and discuss problems of oppression and power, and to explore group solutions to these problems with an accessible medium of communication for all.

The very nature of radio theatre, as theorised by Obola, Gray, and Stone, provides a promising setting for the enactment of the form of theatre religiously suggested by Brecht, Fanon, Freire and Boal. It is largely within this maxim that the place of radio drama as an aspect of Development Theatre is illuminated. The aim here is to explore and exploit the functional potential of art as propounded by Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt (2000), both pillars of New Historicism who (unlike their counterparts of New Criticism and Post Structuralism who treat literature in a historical vacuum) are looking for ways in which literature can be used as a means of understanding social problems and therefore aiming at solving them. Gallagher and Greenblatt are preoccupied with the place of art in the advancement of man, and to this end, they emphasise the relevance of the social and cultural background to a work of arts to its aesthetic appreciation. In studying the background of the work, they argue, the reader/audience is better placed to analyse and give insightful perspectives on the text thereby rendering the work productive.

By refusing to relate literature to life, formalism (together with its offspring in new criticism, post-structuralism and deconstruction) reduces art to a mere tool for entertainment in a fast changing world in which every discipline is adjusting to embrace an ever-changing reality. New criticism's tendency to treat works of art in a historical vacuum, assuming that the text has no rapport to its historical context whatsoever, renders literature unproductive. This is due to the ambivalence that is rooted in deconstruction wherein the text harbours contradictory subjects that are void of a unified meaning. Deconstruction focuses on uncovering systematic incoherence in a text as implied by Jacques Derrida (1983, 125) when he avers that it

interrogates, challenges and violates all forms of 'traditionalist meanings' in literature. New historicism, therefore, offers the latitude to read/listen to these plays from an informed standpoint that would render them as functional as the mainstream Development Theatre. Like Brecht, Freire, Boal and Fanon, new historicists emphasise the process of reading, writing, teaching and listening as actions. It is no surprise then that new historicism has allied itself in varying degrees to an activist thinking like Marxism since it started gaining grounds in the nineteen eighties.

The proponents of new historicism are hesitant to subscribe to a water-tide approach because they would rather respond to the fluid and oscillating nature of history and culture. This explains why in coining the term 'new historicism', Greenblatt carefully described it as a practice rather than a theory. New historicism is a practice that is largely informed by society and history. This is where the theory becomes germane in appreciating different modes of Development Theatre practice, for Development Theatre draws enormously from the cultural traits of the local community as its starting point. Development Theatre calls for informed action for the good of man, and new historicism which Guerin (1992, 320) describes as a 'practice' could not be more apt in analysing the plays under study in this work. In recognising the beginnings of this approach and its turn towards history, Carol Porter highlights names like Hayden White, Terry Eagleton, Mikhail Bakhtin, Bruce Franklin, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Frederick Jameson, Raymond Williams, Eugene Genovese, Annette Kolodney and Sacvan Bercovitch; these scholars had practised what they then called the sociological approach, which is today considered by some scholars as moribund; nevertheless, they have been invaluable resources for those who call themselves today new historicists.

By drawing hugely from history and society, new historicism's closeness to Marxism is obvious, especially within the context of the postcolonial setting of palpable poverty, suffering, dismemberment, alienation, dispossession and helplessness. This setting fuels Marxist-inclined rubrics like 'literature of combat', and a lot has been written

on the fact that literature's commitment to social justice is primordial for progress and development in postcolonial settings in general and Africa in particular. To Jean Paul Sartre (1998, 229), for example, the role of the writer is to side with the oppressed for the sake of freedom and to denounce "violations of formal and personal liberties." By siding with the oppressed, the new historicist finds literature playing its fundamental role for man and the society. Leopold Sedar Senghor is categorical on the question of commitment in African writing. He argues that "in Africa art for art's sake does not exist. All art is social. The minstrel who sings the noble into battle gives him strength and shares his victory"⁹. Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1972, 50) expresses the same view when he writes:

I believe that African intellectuals must align themselves with the struggle of the African masses for a meaningful national ideal. For, we must strive for a form of social organization that will free the manacled spirit and energy of our people so we can build a new country, and sing a new song. Perhaps in a small way, the African writer can help in articulating the feelings behind this struggle.

It is in the same vein that Elechi Amadi (1976, 26) argues:

How can the writer just look on placidly while the struggle for sheer survival rages on? We are all familiar with newspaper reports of people fighting with bibles and chairs in churches or with trumpets and drums in night-clubs. Truly in an emergency a man fights with what he has in hand. Naturally, then, one should expect a writer, when suddenly confronted, to fight with what he has in hand which is his pen.

⁹ Cited in Senghor's *Prose and Fiction*. London: HEB 1976, 82.

How the selected radio drama texts/productions present their subjects and how the audience reads and/or listens to them are central in the working methodology of tackling the selected radio plays herein. The end result is an eclectic interpretation of the texts/productions. This hands-on theoretical framework guides the analysis, especially in chapters five and six. Thus the entire study yields an argument that supports African radio theatre as an alternative approach to Development Theatre. Given the multiple perspectives and interpretations that underscore discourses in the social sciences, the elasticity herein avoids a dogmatic claim and provides a perceptive flexibility of African radio drama.

In this respect, it is noted that radio drama has over the years been given oblique attention by academic and non academic critics alike. By the nature and the context of the primary material under study, there is very little literature on it. Apart from David Kerr who has done some in-depth studies on African radio drama, there is no known informed academic discussion on African radio theatre. Mindful of this, the corpus of literature, especially drama, that invites strong popular undertone that has been written and/or produced by African playwrights in general and Anglophone Cameroonian playwrights in particular serves as a spring board from which to measure and evaluate the length and breathe of African radio theatre as Theatre for Development.

The emergence of radio theatre in particular and popular literature in Anglophone Cameroon was almost imperceptible. By the nineteen fifties there were numerous journalistic and pamphleteering initiatives in the then Southern Cameroons. Buma Kor in an informed writing on the beginning and growth of Cameroon Anglophone writing, states that this was consequent upon the pretty low literacy rate in the colonial days (Nalova Lyonga et al. eds, 66). In the British Southern Cameroons writers like Sankie Maimo, Motombi Wolete, Dan Lantum and Bernard Fonlon, in desperate need of publishing facilities, published poems and short stories in local tabloids like *Cameroon Times* and *Cameroon Outlook*. There was really no significant popular literature at this time. According to Buma Kor

(1993, 67), with the establishment of radio Buea in 1958, a play by the title *Adama, Princess of the Niger* was broadcast repeatedly for about a month.

In French East Cameroon on the other hand, Abel Zomo Bem is among those who published reviews and dramatic critiques in the column of a protestant weekly tabloid *La Semaine Camerounaise*. Besides these, the nineteen sixties and seventies saw the proliferation of theatre groups which, despite government censorship, impacted on the Cameroonian public. The driving forces behind these were Guillaume Oyono-Mbia in East Cameroon and Buma Kor in West Cameroon (*The African Quest*, 245). The latter created the drama and speech performers' Society in Victoria in 1970 "as an attempt to break the monotony of the only available entertainment which was cinema that projected foreign films" (Nalova, Lyonga et al eds, 71). He also had the privilege of reading and reviewing many unpublished works that were written by West Cameroonians. Buma Kor (1993, 7) describes Anglophone Cameroon writing of the seventies as literature of the hunchback. He explains his claim:

...apart from being the sum total of all our writings about our physical conditions- our pride and fall, our opportunities and disgruntleness, our traditional life in marriage or, in conflict with all that is francophone seen within a particular period, is a literature of riddles: we talk of our problems as if they were the problems of other people. We are silent. We bear it within ourselves. Like the hunchback, we conceal so much within our writing, contending we can do nothing about our predicament...this is not an escape. This is not an absurdity. It is something profound. This kind of writing poses great challenges in the bed of its creation. This is why most of the budding Anglophone writers of the 70's wrote with a heavy load upon their shoulders, giving birth to the giant riddle which is significant in their works....

Buma Kor argues forcefully against the numerous critiques on Cameroonian writing that give an oblique view to Anglophone Cameroonian writing with the claim that enough has not been written by Anglophone Cameroonians. To him this tendency has institutionalised the fact that literature in Cameroon is mainly by francophone writers. "This is not true..." he argues (73). This stance contradicts that of Lyonga and Butake in ABBIA (1982, 123) and Alobwede D'Epie (1993, 52). To the latter in what he subtitles "The need for an Anglophone literature" the Cameroonian situation "calls for a conscious and open appeal to the Anglophone public...literature by Anglophones, about Anglophones for Anglophones is a necessity"(56)

In his thought-provoking essay entitled "Historicity and new Anglophone Cameroon Drama" Hansel Eyoh, (1993, 101) states that Anglophone Cameroon Drama is largely informed by history. To him this writing is produced by "playwrights who consider themselves watchdogs of their society, making their roles more meaningful in their application of language, themes and dramatic techniques." (Nalova Lyonga et al. eds, 101). In the same vein, Asheri Kilo discusses the popular nature of Anglophone Cameroon Drama. Kilo (1993, 109) states that she sets out to observe drama from the point of view of popular drama, by which she means drama that is geared towards the interest of the masses.

Arguably, the most exhaustive publication on Cameroon Anglophone Drama which is not in consonant with Kor's views is Shaddrack Ambanasom's *Education of the Deprived: A Study of Four Cameroonian Playwrights*. (1993). Ambanasom intimates that Anglophone Cameroon literature, albeit not commensurate to its francophone counterpart, dates back to the nineteen-fifties, and that the literature presents an appealing bibliography with a remarkable upsurge in the number of publications from the 1990s. This development, to him, is a sign of better days to come. Ambanasom (1993, 12) presents a fine exposition of Anglophone Cameroonian drama with focus on the commitment of the writers towards social change:

These playwrights ...can be said to be 'writers in politics', to borrow from Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, and in their politics they side with the people, the downtrodden and the left-out, subtly giving them a sense of direction. Herein lies the education of the deprived.

Ambanasom discusses the different themes explored by Anglophone Cameroonian Playwrights in relation to their commitment to social change. To him Victor Epie Ngome's *What God has put Asunder* is an allegory of the deteriorating state of the union between Anglophone Cameroonians and their francophone counterparts. Ambanasom (18) writes:

The metaphor of marriage, an ingenious theatrical device employed by the playwright, allows for two levels of meaning, the literal and the symbolic, with of course, the latter being the more significant. Young Cameroonians without a sound knowledge of the political history of their country, together with non-Cameroonians may grasp only the literal level and yet be sufficiently satisfied with it. It is an exciting play on matrimonial problems and the related issues....

Ambanasom (1993, 105) goes on, like Eyoh, to suggest an interpretation of the allegorically hemmed play which seeks to conscientise the population on the prevailing injustices and distortion in what characterises the union between Anglophone Cameroon and Francophone Cameroon. To Ambanasom (105), Bole Butake is one of the two giants of Anglophone Cameroon theatrical scene. He posits that:

Butake succeeds in making his plays scathing commentaries on contemporary social life both in Cameroon in particular and Africa in general; especially where there is irresponsible political leadership, unconscionable dictatorial rule, rapacious greed, corruption, immorality and the misuse of power. This malpractice by the elite in control of the reins

of power provokes the justified anger of the oppressed masses who advocate a change of the status quo...

Further, Ambanasom illustrates how Butake seeks to empower women and the masses in *The Rape of Michelle*, *Lake God*, *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, and *Shoes and Four Men in Arms*. To him women who are traditionally relegated to the background find themselves at the central stage of crucial events. And by doing this Butake is saying that things have changed and are changing; that every hand has to be on deck for the way forward.

Turning to Bate Besong and John Nkengasong, Ambanasom identifies a change in style and to a lesser extent subject matter. He states that unlike Epie and Butake who remain loyal to traditional forms and structure, Besong and Nkengasong are of the worldly world. He writes that Besong in particular:

...is a self-conscious writer determined to break with the past. A militant playwright with an obvious innovatory dramatic technique, Besong is continually experimenting and searching for new techniques of expression. In his theatre there is the general absence of those conventional sign posts that, from practice and tradition, we have come to consider the very hallmark of drama...(95)

By and large, secondary literature on Cameroonian drama tends to lay emphasis on the “Popular nature” of the works. This tendency is provoked by the fact that most of the works are produced on stage (sometimes before being published). By staging the plays there is the benefit of reaching a few more city dwellers (who would afford the time and the means of going to the theatre). Here again comes the question as to whether these plays can really be styled “literature for the masses”, a question that lends credence to the need for radio drama to take the centre stage as the people’s literature as it minimises most of the hurdles posed by the Cameroonian-produced mainstream drama that struggles to attain the popular status by

turning to the stage. Cameroonian radio drama poses as the veritable space where the people participate more effectively in the production and consumption of culture, and this provides a fertile ground for Development Theatre.

Amongst the few critics to focus on Cameroonian popular literature itself and drama in particular is Michael Kelly (1978) who pays special attention to Victor Elame Musinga. Kelly (1978, 293) finds in Musinga a source of hope to the budding Cameroon Anglophone popular literature. In “Talking Pidgin”, he asserts:

I consider Cameroon lucky in the robust talent of the playwright Victor Elame Musinga. His work is entertaining, realistic and linguistically rich. In this it makes a pleasant change to the tedious solemnity, unreal romanticism and stilted language of some African writers much more widely known. If only Mr. Musinga keeps his feet on the ground and his ears open to the real ways people locally speak and behave, and the real issues that interest them, he should prove a major literary talent and could contribute much to gaining pidgin its true recognition as a vehicle for dramatic and witty and rich linguistic expression.

In the same vein, the Canadian scholar, Stephen Arnold, in a full length article entitled “A comparative View of the Career and Aesthetic of Victor Elame Musinga, Cameroon’s Most Popular Playwright”, traces the evolution, growth, techniques and the coming to the limelight of Musinga basing his analysis on what he describes as four of his most popular plays: *The Tragedy of Mr. No Balance* (1966), *Madam Magrano* (1968), *Colofonco* (1970) and *The Trials of Ngowo* (1978). By way of conclusion Arnold (Lemuel, A. Johnson et al, eds, 67), amongst other things, pointedly states that:

Musinga falls somewhere between being Ekwensi and Onitsha literature on theatre. He is a truly popular artist. Unspoiled by school, he has studied his audience carefully,

and obviously knows what they want. Usually he gives it to them, and when he does not, he is enough of an artist-tactician to undermine their positions so quietly or rambunctiously that they do not notice their minds being changed.

The appreciation by Arnold and Kelly of Musinga as the best popular playwright may be founded. Mention must be made however, that almost all of Musinga's works are not aimed at the radio for production though some like *Incredible Madam Ida* have been adapted for radio.

In yet another publication in *Signs and Signals*, titled "Orphans of the Commonwealth: An Account of the 1978 Guinness Cameroon Great writers Contest", Arnold presents an account of the then budding Anglophone Cameroon writing. Arnold appreciates the entries by several participants from different parts of Anglophone Cameroon and blames the very low quality of the plays on the absence of reading materials to Anglophone Cameroonians, the lack of a University in that part of the country and the general isolation of that territory from the rest of the English-speaking world. Arnold, however, admits that the production remains a significant measuring rod to the promising Anglophone Cameroonian writing (96). Of Cameroon Anglophone writing, no publication could be located on its radio drama. However, at the level of the continent there exists a significant quantity of publications on radio drama and its usefulness on the continent.

The radio Deutsche Welle through its Radio Training centre pays much attention to the promotion of African radio theatre. Between 1980 and 1990 the institution initiated two literary competitions for African countries. Besides this, the Deutsche Welle training centre has organised several training programmes for radio drama production, both at its headquarters in Cologne and in different regions of Africa, in which participants wrote and produced radio plays that reflected their local realities. According to the director of Radio Deutsche Welle, Winfried-Illo Graff ("Forward", 7), the main

subjects of the plays produced by African trainees in his institution represent:

Some cross-section of problems and aspects of contemporary African societies: rural traditions and values contrasting with urban behaviours and ideas, the search for cultural identity in times of rapid and often enough drastic changes, social and economic problems, the emancipation of women in a predominantly male-oriented society, the re-appraisal of the colonial past, political parables against oppression and corruption, and the wealth of oral literature as an everlasting tool for reflection upon the state of society.

It is in the same light that Wolfram Frommlet in “Introduction” in *African Radio Plays* (1991) underscores the relevance of radio drama to the development of African societies. Frommlet opines that because radio drama artificially creates events and puts them into dramatic enactments which are closer to everyday practical realities; it is the fertile ground for galvanising the new approach to development that is people-oriented.

Both Graff and Frommlet identify the invaluable role African radio drama can play and already plays in the area of development theatre. Unlike the former, who within the programme structure at Cologne plays an essentially administrative role and therefore makes a rather casual appraisal of African radio drama, the latter (“Introduction”, 19) dwells further on the mechanism of radio drama in Africa, exploring its role which he states:

Stimulates peoples’ imagination about their collective efforts towards a better future and thus contributes to a culture of discussion and public dispute and to the vivid appraisal of the unbeatable strength of African peoples, if only they were allowed to speak out and be heard.

Barely a year after the publication of *African Radio Plays*, and still within the Radio Deutsche Welle framework, Frommlet in *Radio Drama as Part of Cultural Development* (1992, 7), pointedly remarks that in Asia and Africa the enthusiasm with which the catch-phrase ‘people-based Development’ has been received and floated is indicative of the fact that the implementation of theoretical concepts drawn up by planners, technocrats and elites does not yield the expected results. This, to him, is essentially because such concepts were all too often imposed upon the people of the South.

Frommlet and, more especially, Graff explain the role that radio drama can play towards enlightening the dispossessed masses in Asia and Africa without explaining with details and elaborating with specific works how useful the plays can be in specific contexts. They assume, and erroneously so, that the African experience and that of Asia are the same. The idea of a uniform cultural space in Africa and Asia is faulty and at best misleading, as there is a considerable variation even within Africa. East, West and Southern Africa have different socio-political conditions under which theatre operates; such differences are reflected in the productions.

Five years after, in his book entitled *African Popular Theatre: from pre-colonial times to the present day* (1995), David Kerr argues that the attempt by development field experts to employ drama as a strategy for communicating with and enlightening the masses is partly a reaction from mass media, which are seen as remote from the people and open to government propaganda. Kerr then delves into the history of African radio drama, stating that the colonial government did very little to encourage indigenous productions but surprisingly did put some ‘considerable effort’ into encouraging radio drama after independence. In a more informed publication entitled *Dance, Media Entertainment and popular Theatre in South-East Africa*, (1999), Kerr explores the evolution of African radio drama in Zambia and Malawi from the colonial through the postcolonial phases of the countries’ history. He states that the radio drama series dubbed “the Malokopo” started in Zambia in the nineteen fifties and continued after independence. The play is a thirty minutes didactic satire, which

depends on comic improvisational talents of Edward Mungoni. Kerr (1999, 168) comments:

In fact, social didacticism was far more common than overt political ideology. The series regularly presented plots in which the audience was exhorted to avoid crime, infidelity or excessive alcohol consumption. Mungoni had initiated a technique...of breaking out of role to address the listener in order to reinforce the message. He achieved this through asides in the middle of the dialogue and, almost invariably, in a final synopsis of the message at the end of the play...The moralising allowed *Malikopo* to become an important interpreter of contemporary Zambian life, providing an accumulated domestic ideology, which privileged certain types of behaviour, and through satirical condemnation, marginalised others. The values endorsed were those of rural community mutuality, hard work, sobriety, and monogamous male-dominated married life.

“*Malikopo*” was a very popular series in the nineteen seventies and eighties when people did all not to miss the programme. Another very popular series at this time in Malawi was the Chibemba play, ‘*Ifyabukoya*’ (Things Common to us). In Malawi, Radio drama in English began effectively after independence with the most popular being “Theatre of the Air” broadcast on a thirty minute-slot. Unlike the ‘*Malikopo*’ of radio Zambia, “Theatre of the Air” depended largely on amateurishly scripted play scripts that were motivated by a small token in return for submitting them to radio Malawi. “Theatre of the Air,” however, became famous with the coming to the limelight of more professionally-oriented writers and producers.

Kerr’s discussion on the origin and development of radio drama in South East Africa paints a vivid picture of what obtained in Anglophone Africa in general. There was a desire in many writers and producers to develop the radio theatre industry, but they could not do much owing to the labyrinthine colonial and/or postcolonial

media landscape. In his book, Kerr gives detail information on the various stages of radio theatre in Anglophone Africa. He implies that the development strengthens the sense of wholeness to the people who were making an effort at coping with the new system ushered in by colonialism. He does not directly look at radio theatre as a vehicle for fostering development.

Perhaps the most radio theatre-focused publication on Cameroonian radio theatre is Asheri Kilo's (1999) "Community Radio Drama as a Medium of Inclusive Education, Conscientisation, Democracy and Development for Children with Special Needs." According to Kilo the primary objective of radio play is entertainment, for radio plays educate the community by sharing experiences and creating contexts for reflection and action. A community radio play, she goes on,

... draws out participation and expression of popular concerns and analysis, overcoming people's fears and rationalisations and building confidence and identity, stimulating discussions and a critical understanding of problems, contradictions, and structures underlying everybody's reality; clarifying the possibilities and strategies for action string peoples emotions and eventually mobilising them for action Radio plays can thus be used to develop awareness of rural populations on the need for inclusion of children with special needs, using local media in the form of songs, dance and proverbs. Radio drama is therefore suitable to be used as a medium of social change conflict resolution, discussion on human rights, democracy and gender issues both in and outside the classroom. Radio drama gives voices to the voiceless. It is a medium for both children and adults.

Through drama, local community radios can reflect on the local identity and culture of the people, representing different groups and interests in the community with an inclusion of marginalised and minority groups.

Local language and cultural expressions are the raw material for community Radio plays. This in itself is a sure means of preserving our indigenous languages, which stand the risk of extinction due to globalisation. The people's language or a lingua franca would be the most appropriate language to be used in a community radio drama.

Having observed the potential of drama as a tool for social change and advocacy, we therefore recommend the use of drama or role-play in classrooms as a teaching method that will hold the interest of the children, especially children with special needs such as those withdrawn from labour, those orphaned from HIV/AIDS, physically disabled, visually impaired, children who abuse drugs, street children, and mentally challenged children.

Although Kilo outlines the role of radio plays in fostering vertical and horizontal interaction in the society with focus on children with special needs, she does not explore the crucial role the plays can attain in re-allocating the larger masses from the periphery to the centre. We would want to give the selected radio plays a broader perspective and analytical reading and listening; such wider perspectives and in-depth interpretation speak to the pivotal role played by radio theatre in Africa and Cameroon in particular, a twist that veers significantly away from the existing critical literature on the subject.



Courtesy: Farm Radio International

Chapter Three

Development Theatre: Progress, Impediments and an Alternative Approach

Understanding the context of theatre in pre-colonial Africa is crucial to the appreciation of the transition that ushers in the New Theatre (or Development Theatre) on the continent. The colonial experience and particularly its economic backbone (colonial capitalism) arbitrarily divided African communities into new social groupings and classes that ushered in different social forces. The new social order had tremendous influence in re-shaping the forms and contents of performances to suit the new realities that would ultimately be more beneficial to western capitalism than to the colonised. True to the obvious spill-over from this (that include among others - failed development strategies in a continent that has remained poor and largely dependent), the need to find and develop ways of giving the masses in Africa a voice in this new reality finds expression in (among other modes) Development Theatre. Albeit not new in Africa today, Development Theatre has been given a new impetus as practitioners and researchers explore its potential with the intention of relocating the common man from the obscure periphery to the centre of action in his/her life. The effort faces factors that impede the process in different ways. Yet, there is overwhelming evidence that Development Theatre projects are seen as credible methods of using the people's culture as a crucial site and strategic force for productive social change in Africa. One finds hurdles in Development Theatre practice in Africa as theatre practice takes shape from the pre-colonial to the postcolonial phases of the continent's history. The practice which is generally considered a better way of facing the challenges of the continent would find in Radio Drama a formidable alternative.

Pre-Colonial Performances and the New Theatre in Africa

The background material of drama and performance in pre-colonial Africa derived from the cultural, social, political and historical happenings in people's lives. One of the peculiar characteristics of this drama and performances was that they were always communal. There was hardly a clear distinction between the audience and the actor as expressed in western traditional performances. Those festivals held around planting and harvesting or before and after wars were commonplace communal activities. Jomo Kenyatta's portrayal of the *Ituika* ceremony among the Agikuyu of Kenya in *Facing Mount Kenya* (1965) is a detailed articulation of a communal performance in precolonial Africa. The duration of *Ituika* spanned several months during which everybody in the community would participate. Here, even performances marking transitions of any type in the lives of individuals, like the rites of passage from childhood to adulthood and marriage or initiation into any of the vital societies in the community, were communal. Reducing these ceremonies into private occasions would be impossible in a setting where the individual was pretty much an expression of the community in the same manner that the community was an expression of its constituent individuals. This strong sense of interdependence between the individual and the community translates into constant exchanges between the actors, those performing at the centre of the playground, and the audience; those acting at the centre were by design an extension of those watching and vice-versa. At any point in time, those watching could suddenly be the ones being watched. In the same vein, those acting could at any stage of the performance be the ones watching.

There is much literature on the chorus and response patterns of songs, dances and rituals in African performances that point to the practice as essentially interactive. As Leo Howe (2000) puts it in "Risk, Ritual and Performance", whether it is a dance, a song or a poem, there was always an interactive conversation taking place between the different actors that were hemmed together by their

presence at the playground. The focus of rituals was the acknowledgement of the gods, usually through the ancestors. The dramatic component of ritual played a significant role in maintaining the sense of community. Even though there may be expert griots or those specialized in one performance or the other, there was always a likelihood of having anybody for a performer or the object of performance at any point in time during the process. Whatever peculiarity in form and content of performances obtained in different communities, they got paled by the strong sense of the awareness of community that pervaded all the performances. There was a recurrent sense of awareness that the performances, whether essentially for entertainment or for intercession with the leaders and the gods, were geared towards the well-being of the community.

This vibrant source of life in the pre-colonial setting was curtailed and in some cases banned with the advent of European missionaries and colonialism in Africa. A case in point is the nineteen twenty five banning of *Ituika* by the British colonial government of Kenya when the latter saw in it expressions of anti colonial sentiment. The colonial establishment resorted to substituting African performances with European types of rituals and dramas that were meant to foster the status of Europe in Africa. They set out to instil European nationalism through art as reflected in the performance of Shakespeare's plays for African kings as early as sixteen hundred and seven (Mlamla, 1991, 57). In this, the ground was being prepared for more organized European theatre that would lurk on through the post-colonial epoch. This was part of a larger colonial project of inculcating European values and attitude among the colonized. A new twist was given to African culture as traditional forms of performance became questionable due to the influence of this new social order. Consequent upon this was that traditional African performances adapted themselves to the new social reality imposed by the colonial experience.

Okot p'Bitek (1986, 16) avers that the Western tradition which regards culture as something that can be bought and sold (in which case the artist is paid with money for his/her works) is entirely new

to African thought. This assertion is erroneous because prior to cash economy, the artist in Africa was usually rewarded with gifts. Cash economy is en vogue; hence it is to be understood that these griots would be rewarded with money. Moreover, coming at the heels of the new theatre in Africa, P'bitek's aversion generates the assumption that African theatre is cabined in its traditional boundaries, and that even in the face of the colonial cum neo-colonial onslaught, it is better to maintain the form whereas the new hybrid conceived through the marriage of Western tradition and African cultural forms would be unavoidable in the postcolonial setting. However, assumptions of this nature may give one the latitude to appreciate how popular theatre that showcases development issues became paramount in Africa. For, such assumptions offer a platform on which to critically examine the economic, political, and social factors in pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial Africa in order to further examine if the Western tradition of art as good or service to be bought and/or sold is still alien to African thinking.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the relevance of popular theatre and its impact on the relationship between art and society is better appreciated within the postcolonial context, especially when one views the forced marriage between power and society through the prism of the historian and political activist, Walter Rodney (1982, 224) who argues that:

Power is the ultimate determinant in any human society, being basic the relations within any group and between groups. It implies the ability to defend one's interest and if necessary to impose one's will by any means available... When one society finds itself forced to relinquish power entirely to another society that in itself is a form of underdevelopment.

Power relations could not be closer to theatre when viewed in this light. A discourse on theatre is by and large a discourse on power relations in the society, and it is within this maxim that we would

understand why the colonial establishment got uncomfortable with traditional African performances. Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1999, xv) corroborates Mlamla (1991, 57) by stating that the colonial states banned performances that sought to inform and energise the people at the grassroots and only permitted the ones whose contents had been censored. Ngugi (1999, xv) goes on to inform us that:

The colonial governor and visiting dignitaries could still welcome a touch of native drumming and acrobatics where these were interpreted as expressing satisfaction with the colonial status quo. These performances may still have had a communal aspect, but they were not really expressive of the communal needs for a change. The form was communal, but the content was often anti community. Where the same communal forms were injected with a new pro-people content, anti colonial resistance for instance, the colonial state was quick to react negatively.

During the colonial era the struggle over performances was essentially over who was in control of the form and the social relevance to which the form was put. It was primarily the struggle over form to control content as the colonial establishment sought to be in control to demonstrate power while the anti-colonial institutions yearned for the same control to implement their revolutionary agenda.

The same thorny romance between the colonial establishment and the anti-colonial forces over content and form of popular performances continued into the post-colonial period. The new post-colonial governments, governments that were essentially anti-people in their economic and social policies, sought to promote the traditions of the communal drum and song, but when these raised basic concerns of the masses, the same regimes resorted to a sophisticated form of rejection - censorship. Nevertheless, a lot has been said and written about postcolonial African performances and the transition to the new theatre with the coming of colonisation, and

the impression one gets is that a wonderful yarn is being spun in the loom of Development Theatre where hitherto marginalized peoples at the periphery are becoming actors in their own drama of survival.

The Emergence of African Development Theatre

The significant debut of Development Theatre experiment in Africa took place in Botswana in 1973; thereafter, several countries took the cue in organizing theatre workshops that addressed matters of social and economic concerns to the masses. As indicated earlier, most of the projects at this beginning were spear-headed by Universities in conjunction with governments and international organizations who weighed in mostly by providing incentives. After the failure of most development initiatives from the centre more than a decade after independence, theatre was seen as a way of getting the people involved in crucial issues to their livelihood, a process that draws from a pre-colonial communal way of life to address concerns of the time. Thus pockets of initiatives emerged in Malawi, Tanzania, Namibia, South Africa, Ghana and other countries where the experiments recorded different degrees of success and failure at that dawn of the new theatre on the continent. A couple of other countries would later emerge with land-mark workshops that remain a source of reference in defining and evaluating the practice. While some of these remarkable workshops in different African countries are telling of the degree to which communities can be energized by the use of theatre as a tool for mobilization and action, the circumstances surrounding their emergence owing to the colonial-cum neo-colonial power dynamics remain compelling.

Botswana

Community involvement in theatre in Botswana dates back to the pre-colonial days with the Kgotla, a traditional community forum for the people of Botswana. If Kgotla was a forum where participants

(often from every facet of the society) sang, danced, told stories and masqueraded, it also was the nucleus of the community from which policies were conceived for eventual consideration by the local traditional administrators for the people within the polity. This vibrant interactive avenue between the traditional rulers and the people started losing steam with the coming of the colonial administration that enormously curtailed the ability of the traditional rulers in community mobilization; the management of community affairs became the responsibility of the local colonial administrators. The weakening of Kgotla by such connivance of events did not give room for vibrant community mobilization structure at the dawn of independence like was the case in Zambia and Zimbabwe. However, there was an urgent need for a form of development framework that would be all-inclusive. Such a need was enhanced by the geographical and historical contexts of Botswana at the time. Strongly militating for this was the land-locked position of a country that is surrounded by South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia in the East and Zambia in the North. In the advent of Development Theatre initiatives Namibia and Zimbabwe were deep in the fierce struggle for independence that they would achieve in nineteen ninety and nineteen eighty, respectively.

With the Kgotla almost non-existent due to its suppression by the colonial authorities, there was a resultant absence of community participation and group decision-making on matters of interest to the people. A growing sense of distress was visible in many rural areas where earlier attempts at eliciting community participation had failed (Ross Kidd, 1978, 1). In the early nineteen seventies a community councillor, Jeppe Kelepile, together with renown adult educationists, Ross Kidd and Martin Byram, then employees of the University of Botswana conceived and nursed the idea of employing theatre as a continuation of Kgotla to mobilize people towards greater community participation and action. The idea was born in a village workshop organized by the University of Botswana. At the workshop drama was used to highlight societal issues in a typical Botswana community. Under the auspices of the University of Botswana's

Adult Literacy Programme with Ross Kidd at the helm, a framework for using theatre for community education was developed. The programme was named Laedza Batanani, which means ‘community awakening’ within the context of the lacuna created by the absence of Kgotla. With Laedza Batanani came a general re-awakening in the entire country as theatre became a popular form of education during agricultural shows, health seminars and district conferences (Byram, 1999, 39). Laedza Batanani was designed to take place for five days annually, but the actual process of planning and organizing, performing, discussing the issues and following them up usually spanned more than five days. Byram (1999, 39) lucidly describes the process as follows:

At the first stage, a district team comprising the university personnel and a selected number of district people met at the agricultural office in January 1973 to discuss the objectives of the very first project. There the timetable, budget, staff and basic planning strategies were mapped out. This team selected the villages and resources for the Laedza Batanani program, while keeping the budget relatively low, as is evidenced by the 1976 allocation of 300 pula (Botswana currency) for the project. A low budget was indeed feasible as the salaries and wages of the university and local government participants were covered by their employees. Five to six months after the initial planning meeting, a two-day community workshop was organized which brought together many people from diverse villages in order to identify and discuss the key problems of their communities as well as to create a village team community leaders who were familiar with the Theatre for Development process as Kidd and Byram explain, “over one hundred community leaders and organizations are invited to this initial workshop. The community representatives bring to this workshop the ideas and concerns that have been discussed in village meetings.” The gathering invited more discussions of the issues to which specific criteria were added:

to identify problems on which their village was inclined to take action; problems that could be accomplished with village support; and problems in which local government workers could offer assistance. Over the several years of Laedza Batanani problems were regularly identified during the community workshop ranging from economic issues to domestic matters. The economic concerns related to poor crops, unemployment, theft and fire, and payment disputes among labourers and employers. Consumer concerns consisted of complaints about poor roads, inflation and transportation. Other matters related to conflicts relating to local government, family and education. For example, many women complained that the absence of their husbands, due to their working across the border, had impacted on their family units. They also protested the restrictions imposed on their involvement with community affairs, as well as other general conflicts surrounding modernization, which fuelled a women's right debate during the 1975 campaign.

The result of Laedza Batanani was spectacular. Similar projects took place in numerous districts around the country as drama became known as an increasingly beneficial way of mobilizing the different communities for action and reaction. The programme tended to identifying concrete local problems and addressing them locally with the local people in their ways through performances. Though the key experts behind Laedza Batanani identified some major setbacks in their endeavour, the programme marks the beginning of the New Theatre in Africa that would eventually be experimented in different countries.

Zambia

According to Byram (1999, 47), the reconciliation of theatre to development in Zambia started as a consequence of government philosophy (that was largely informed by the basic ideas of socialism)

emerging after independence. During the colonial era in Zambia, there was a sustained effort by would-be nationalists to guide and guard indigenous Zambian culture. The would-be nationalist forces encouraged the performances of indigenous art, especially in the rural areas of the country. Like in Zimbabwe and other Southern African countries during the colonial experience, these traditional forms of performing art existed side by side the western-inspired forms. While Zambians performed their indigenous art forms mostly in the rural areas, the settlers focused on the emerging urban settings mostly along the then major rail-way in the country with the primary goal of reminding the settler community of 'home'. The emergence and subsequent assertion of European forms in Zambia had an enormous influence on indigenous forms that were already inspired in part by European forms. Consequently, by the early nineteen fifties there were numerous drama clubs in Zambia that organized themselves into Northern Rhodesia Drama and Choir Association (NRDA) with masked separatist policies that aggressively promoted European art forms at the detriment of African artists and African forms (Dickson Mwansa, 1988). This went a long way to generate new steam in nationalist sentiment that reached its zenith in 1964 with the coming to power of Kenneth Kaunda on the platform of humanism¹⁰, a policy that would be adopted as the national ideology of the country three years later in 1967. Suffice to state that with the culture-focused policy in place quickly came the first nationalist theatre association in the country named Zambia Arts Trust (ZAT).

Consonant with the nationalist trend, the Zambian University Theatre troop founded by students and lecturers of the University of Zambia created the University of Zambia Dramatic Society

¹⁰ Humanism underscored the government's intention to introduce the use of indigenous Zambian life styles and values as a model of constructing the new nation loyal to tradition and at the same time capable of functioning in the global market economy. The concept had as its focal points all-inclusive democracy with its primary attribute of decentralized government, its focus on communalism with emphasis on the family as the nucleus of that community; its all-inclusive nature that asserts the idea of classlessness and equal opportunity in the country. This was going to be the foundation for Zambian national consciousness.

(UNZADRAM). ZAT and UNZADRAM had as their primary objective the encouraging of indigenous art forms, and in this way both structures played an invaluable role in articulating humanism. It was within this time that a renowned University of Zambia professor, Michael Etherton, joined his colleagues and students to develop Chikwakwa, a travelling theatre troop aimed at showcasing the needs of Zambian communities via theatre. Chikwakwa made its debut in travelling theatre with the adaptation of Ferdinand Oyono's *House Boy* that was performed first in Lusaka and later in the Zambian Northern province of Kasamu with David Kerr as its artistic director. The outfit was managed and staffed by students and lecturers or professors with students performing and lecturers directing. According to Patrick Emeka Idoye (1981, 101),

Given the prevailing political atmosphere in Zambia at the time, the Chikwakwa was seen, in essence, as part of the government's wider plans for national unity and socio-economic development and the dissemination of knowledge about the national philosophy of humanism.

Chikwakwa (literally meaning *grass-cutter*), was created in response to the surrogate theatre troops, which professed Zambian ideals but harboured pro-imperialist ideologies. Many are those who saw in it Etherton's hybrid of both Zambian indigenous culture and the so called progressive European values. Informed hugely by Bertolt Brecht, Etherton (1982, 325) himself asserts that "what Brecht had to say about the supreme importance of the people, for whom the popular theatre was intended, was matched by the national philosophy of Zambian Humanism and Nyerere's Scientific Socialism."

In its activities, Chikwakwa popularized open-air theatre in most provinces in Zambia. The adaptive style in different contexts, especially in the provinces, brought enough excitement for the directors to seriously consider a much more communal twist with a more interactive approach. David Kerr started giving serious

consideration to community participation. The community was increasingly perceived as part of the action as much as the audiences in performances as local actors were encouraged to join the productions. Under the dynamic leadership of David Kerr, Chikwakwa embraced a two-prong working component of workshop organization and travelling theatre. The choice between the two would be dictated by the economic and political atmosphere in different localities. Thus, broadly speaking, Kerr spearheaded a community work agenda that took the form of travelling theatre and workshops. While the latter brought the local people, students and University professors working together for the productions of plays targeted at social concerns (like the case of *Blood* which set out to reconcile tradition and modern medicine), the former expanded the conventional goals of a travelling theatre with even much more practical themes in a fast changing setting (like encouraging frugal peasant farmers as showcased in *The Credit Union*). These interactions shaped local and national policies, and in some cases actually initiated them. A landmark workshop within this framework is the Chipata Theatre Workshop of 1971, sponsored by the English Department and the Extra Mural Studies Department of the University of Zambia. Featuring in this workshop were, amongst others, *Villagers Come to Town* by Felix Chibusi and *Mirror* by Balkunddende. Nwansa (1988, 52) avers that the most important achievement of the Chipata Theatre Workshop was the “Chipata Manifesto” which called for the creation of multiple independent theatre companies. The manifesto did not only result in the creation of numerous theatre companies around the country, but such sporadic explosion of theatre companies extended to secondary schools.

Like most of these initiatives at the dawn of independence in Africa, Chikwakwa faced its own challenges. According to Byram (1999, 50-51)

...Chikwakwa had its precarious moment with the government, such as the occasion, in 1972, when Etherton organized the protest against the construction of French

bomber planes that were being used in South Africa. This jeopardized Etherton's entry to the Zambia Arts festival and his own job. Consequently, many of the students/actors were arrested, and unable to perform, and Etherton and Horn were expelled from the country... As it was a University project, financial matters and other University concerns affected its ability to function. Within its first three years of formation, Chikwakwa focused on performances at the open-air theatre in Lusaka...

Despite such challenges, one can argue that the pursuance of the philosophy of humanism by the Zambian government had a tremendous impact on the growth and development of functional theatre in the country. Zambia would join the pace-setting countries in Africa on embracing Development Theatre as a way of ensuring community participation and subsequent opening-up of the avenue for progress and development.

Nigeria

The beginning of Development Theatre practice in Nigeria is closely associated with Ahmadu Bello University's Wasan Manoma project. Informed by what had obtained in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana, the University's Theatre Department established numerous theatre projects as a way of selling their concept to the people and the authorities. The person behind the initiative was Dr. Steve Abah (1985, 41) who states that the idea was to "relate theatre studies to and draw inspiration from society." To Stephen Chifunyise (1989, 19), Abah had not only been influenced by the numerous Development Theatre workshops in other parts of Africa but had been inspired by Paolo Freire. Chifunyise explains that: "The Samaru project and the community project have been attempts at moving away from the 'banking method of teaching that is essentially anti-dialogical towards a dialogical method'"

Unlike in Zambia and Botswana where emphasis was not on getting students actively involved in all the stages of the practice, the Amadu Bello scenario in Nigeria had students offered community experience as part of their core courses in the University. Development Theatre was a training programme for first, second and third year students at the Amadu Bello University. The first year students experimented with their workshop at Samaru. What became known as the Theatre for Integrated Development (TIDE), which then partly involved second and third year students, was experimented in several parts of Nigeria. Focus was on rural and semi-urban areas. In spite of the minute differences in the various experiments due to variables in the social and political climate of workshop venues, the underlying goal remained paramount: to re-awaken the dis-empowered people at the grassroots, to energise them and channel their capacities to the decision-making processes of their community.

Incidentally, Michael Etherton who founded Chikwakwa Theatre in Zambia and eventually moved to Amadu Bello was one of the driving forces behind the first community theatre workshop fifty miles away from Amadu Bello University campus. The programme began as collaboration between the Amadu Bello University students and the farmers of Soba. The farmers served as the resource persons who brought the issues while the students prepared plays for the 'Wasan Manoma' series, a Hausa phrase for "Plays for Farmers" (Byram, 1999). Michael Etherton had started the programme by identifying community leaders in Soba and arranging discussion sessions with them, the farmers and the students of ABU. Eventually, the students spent some days with the farmers during which they sought to understand their daily challenges. With a better understanding of the farmers' problems, the students went back to the university and consulted with the agricultural experts so as to have a more scientific insight into the basic problems they had identified as lack of basic drinking water, poor health care, poor education and corruption in local administration. It is then that the

students sketched and developed a play for performance at Soba and other neighbouring communities.

From the enthusiasm generated by the project at Soba, Amadu Bello University authorities turned to the neighbouring community of Samaru. Here the approach employed in Soba was adopted. Students were to actively take part from the beginning to the end of the workshop. Byram presents the scene at Samaru as follows:

The high density town of Samaru housed university labourers and staff. As the Amadu Bello University Collective described it: “With a population of about thirty thousand, Samaru has grown up alongside the university and houses its Junior staff who live for the most part in conditions which contrast harshly with the privileged life style of the university’s senior staff on campus.” With senior staff housing subsidized by the university, some university people were able to purchase and/or lease out premises in Samaru to residents and lower-paid employees of the university, a practice that fuelled the town’s perception of the university as a landowner. The objective of the projects had been two-fold. The format closely resembled the community theatre projects of Soba and Bomo, though the Samaru residents were not part of the play-making or analyses stages of the project. First, small groups comprising Hausa and non-Hausa-speaking students were sent to the village. Upon returning to class, they discussed their observations, and they later returned to Samaru to clarify further any ambiguities arising from the classroom discussions. Back in the classroom the students identified an issue for the drama, while continuing to return to Samaru to collect more information from its residents as necessary. Once back at the University, they analysed the information with the help of university tutors, while also exchanging information among student groups. To stress further the development of a group consciousness, the themes were derived collectively. Play-making was undertaken

in small groups, developing stories out of isolated points and using the issues as components. Such issues were then explored through analysis with the idea of provoking debate in the community by creating various opinionated characters in performance....

After Soba and Samaru came the Borno project and the process in all the projects was basically the same. A couple of years later there would be a drift in the practice by Amadu Belo University. The Amadu Belo University Theatre Collective decided to take a step ahead by establishing a more meaningful relationship between the facilitators and the beneficiary communities. They did not use much of the data taxonomy that they had been leaning more on; in lieu of it, they spent more time with the villagers during which they integrated fully in the chores of the villagers and virtually became part of their daily lives during the workshop periods. This was the case with the 1989 Onyuwei workshop. Ndumbe Eyoh (1992, 72) who took part in Onyuwei paints the picture of what obtained as follows:

At Onyuwei we simply allowed the village to ride over us. We joined in several meetings held in the village by various groups whenever one was announced to us. Through such meetings we shared not only in the discussions but also in the cultural dimensions of their lives. Most afternoons and evenings were also used for cultural sharings between villagers and the workshop participants, and we were to discover the richness and variety of the culture and traditions of the Onyuwei people through which the community articulated its problems. For historical reasons, including war and security, the people of Onyuwei had migrated from Ogene by way of Otobi to their present location. Onyuwei is a corruption of Unuwei, which means "Fight of Shame." The victims of internecine wars, their ancestors discovered a highly fertile tract of land buffered by a network of rivers and streams and founded the village where it now stood. The

waterways helped... Ironically, this same buffer now threatens the very survival of the community. This is because the village now needs vital supplies from the urban areas and must reach out with its predominantly agricultural produce, a process hampered by the absence of a permanent structure, compounded by bad roads and the periodic flooding of the streams. And so once again my life is linked to yet another need for a bridge ... The community had made several contributions towards the construction of the main bridge linking Onyuwei to the next village, Adankari. Unfortunately, however, this was never enough to construct a permanent structure, and the temporary bridges put up invariably got swept away during the rains because of flooding. This community was particularly sensitive and was rather vociferous and articulate in condemning government about lack of equity in locating development projects. They were aware of less populous and more remote villages which fared much better simply because they have sons who were highly placed. But what was particularly remarkable was the fact that their frustration had not tempered their resolve, although it was evident that they had already begun to develop a culture of resignation, which in turn was turning into a culture of defiance. What we did was to use improvisation to try to deepen our understanding of the situation, and each evening we gathered in the village square with the villagers and had them act out their problems. During each session, the villagers took their turns to act out the various roles, either to give an interpretation of situations and events they thought had not been properly presented, or to advance the story-line...

Coming at the heels of the Bomo project (that took place in 1980 and became the spring board for evaluating other projects due to its relative success), the Masca and the Samaru; Onyuwei came to put

Nigeria in the spotlight as a veritable place on the map of the history and development of Development Theatre in Africa.

Kenya

Kenya's experimentation with Development Theatre, particularly the well-known Kamiriithu project, ushered in a dramatically different trajectory from the general trend with experimentations in other countries in Africa. To one of the key resource persons at Kamiriithu, Ngugi Wa Miri, the experience was the most important as seen in the fact that it has been emulated by schools and discussed by scholars and practitioners in and out of Kenya. (Eyoh, 1984, 67). Some background information on Kamiriithu would provide a more compelling sense of appreciation of what has remained a legendary experimentation in social theatre practice on the continent.

Some Kamiriithu local residents got together and asked themselves what they could do with a long vacant piece of land allocated to them for social activities by the government. A health facility they had agreed to put up (in conjunction with the village development experts) was not being used, and the building was almost falling down. A committee was then set up to find out how best to use the facility. This committee came up with a recommendation that they should organize certain activities towards long-run communal benefits, activities that would include adult literacy amongst others. It is then that the need for a cultural committee resulted with the coming of Ngugi Wa Miri and Ngugi Wa Thiongo, (Kimani Gecau, 1989) into the project as resource persons. With the inauguration of an educational and cultural centre with an all-inclusive adult education programme came a good enough reason for Ngugi and Ngugi to oblige and engage. In an interview with Ndumbe Eyoh (1989, 69), Ngugi Wa Miri presents the circumstances surrounding Kamiriithu:

It was the result of the people's demands and by the people here I mean the peasants and the workers that I was working with at Kamiriithu, that the whole question of cultural programmes, relevant cultural programmes, was important. The peasants and workers themselves had initiated this and invited us to collaborate, to contribute the resources that we had ourselves, just as they themselves were contributing their energy, as we call it, the "harambe" of sweat. The "Harambe" is what the Kenyan bourgeoisie use as a tool to give back to the people, what they have stolen from them. But here was the "harambe" where people were collaborating together and contributing their own sweat. Popular theatre was started by the people in Kamiriithu village and they invited us. That is how we started. They invited us to put together a play which was relevant, and they approved it through public reading, and we only got started with rehearsals when they finally agreed that the script was relevant to their own situation. The Kenyan authorities see that theatre which is participatory, that is, theatre which involves the ordinary people in decision-making is attacking their position because they would like a top-bottom system where they control the economy, other people's destiny. I would rather have the theatre or the kind of work I am emphasising, where the people have got the tools and the power to decide their own destiny by evaluating critically their own environment. If you are one who is party to their oppression and their economic exploitation, they look at you and present you on stage saying, - our land problems, our lack of education, our lack of food, and so on, are all part and parcel of the economic structure which is supported by the Kenyan comprador, the Kenyan bourgeoisie, in alliance with imperialism, and that is what the peasants were saying.

Thus they developed a play that would be relevant to the adult literacy programme and the people of Kamiriithu in general. The

initial sketch they scripted was titled “Ngaahika Ndenda”, and it was later revised during working sessions with members of the cultural committee who took and played different parts in the performance.

Kamiriithu did not only raise a revolutionary consciousness amongst the masses but tremendously triggered a strong spirit of collaborative action inspired by a new sense of awareness of their circumstances. That the government of David Arab Moi reacted swiftly in not only banning the play and destroying the two thousand seat open-air theatre that the community had constructed but also incarcerating Ngugi Wa Thiongo is a clear proof of the impact of the theatre project and the way it not only raised a revolutionary consciousness amongst the masses but went on to instigate a degree of collaborative action based on a new sense of awareness of their immediate reality.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe, a relatively young country, has a much more elaborate and grounded Development Theatre tradition in Africa with strong roots from the era of nationalist struggle for independence. As part of its reconstruction strategy, the government of the Southern African nation encouraged and supported the re-animation and development of indigenous culture as a way of concretizing the socialist ideology as an instrument of transferring political and economic power to the people of Zimbabwe. Prior to independence the combatants in the struggle for Zimbabwe’s independence had used the “pungwe”¹¹ as a tool for informing and educating the masses. Stephen Chifunyise (1990, 276) argues that “pungwe”

¹¹ The “pungwe” enabled the freedom fighters to sensitize the people of Zimbabwe on their activities and the role the common man was to play in the struggle. It enabled the voice of the people to be heard and considered in the decisions on which direction the struggle for the independence of Zimbabwe would take. As such, it became a vital part of the Zimbabwean social function that eventually translated into a fertile ground for Development Theatre. For more on this see Stephen Chifunyise’s “Trends in Zimbabwean Theatre since 1980” in *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16 (2) (June 1990): 276.

transformed itself to the post-independence rally, and by 1983 the “pungwe” could still be found in Zimbabwe, co-opted as the significant starting point for a Theatre for Development workshop in the district of Mulewa. The 1983 workshop in Mulewa was largely inspired by Kamiriithu and the role played by Ngugi wa Miri in Mulewa is very significant as indicated by Dale Byram (1999, 114-115) articulating the context of Mulewa:

As part of the process of mobilizing for the community-based theatre ideal, the Zimbabwe Foundation for Education and Production (ZIMFEP) created a theatre company of school leavers, Zimbabwe theatre works. The participants were selected because of their involvement in ZIMFEP and their keen interest in theatre. The group was used as a resource and its members became the official trainers along with Ngugi wa Miri and Kimani Gecau. Zimbabwe Theatre Works encouraged other groups to develop community-based theatre in Zimbabwe. And, through the participatory process, community participants were organized into musicians playing ngoma, mbira, drums, and other traditional instruments, as well as dancers and orators. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* was then adapted to the Zimbabwean historical circumstance. Zimbabweans were attracted to the themes. As Ngugi Wa Miri explains, “the play was also selected because of its relevance to Zimbabwean history of struggle against imperialism. In the process of adapting and translating the play into Shona, acting, casting and organizing the production, the community ‘appropriated’ the play making it theirs.”

In an effort to involve as many people as possible, the activities were then re-directed to Penga Penga, a central meeting point for the nine villages that comprised the district. There an open-air theatre was constructed, as had occurred in Kamiriithu, Kenya where the play was performed several times. .. through these engagements,

other areas became inspired to create their own community-based theatre projects... Evidently, these initiatives very much appealed to the Zimbabwean government. In 1983, the government hosted two Theatre for Development Workshops in Zimbabwe. The first, the sub-regional workshop at Ranch House College took place on July 18 1983. It brought together theatre workers from the southern region of Africa as well as cultural officers of the African National congress of South Africa. The second, the African workshop on Theatre for Development, took place between August 24 and September 3 at Mulewa, Zimbabwe.

Essentially, the format of the Murewa workshop was like the workshop at Kamiriithu. As it was typical of this approach in Development Theatre, the participating persons were sub-divided under the direction of a resource leader who ensured that there were no hitches. Subsequently, improvisations that brought to the limelight the basic challenges in the community were rehearsed, with “pungwe” as the base of cultural activities, and later staged for reflection and discussion. Chifunyise (1999, 256) opines that Development Theatre in Africa received a “tremendous boost” as more than one hundred experts came from different parts of Africa.

Cameroon

Unlike Botswana, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria where traces of Development Theatre practice date back to the pre-colonial and colonial periods, Development Theatre practice in Cameroon effectively started in 1984 in Kumba, Meme Division of the South West Region of the country. Emelda Ngufor Samba (2005, 28) captures the reasons for the belated start of the practice in Cameroon by arguing that:

Until the mid eighties, Cameroonians were apparently satisfied with the economic and political situation of their country. The saying ‘a full stomach makes no noise’ justifies

the lateness with which they joined other African people to express their plight through popular art forms. Another reason could be the oppressive Ahidjo regime which gave no room for the expression of opinion contrary to that of the state....

The Kumba workshop was a follow-up of Murewa workshop (earlier held in Zimbabwe in 1983). Amongst the numerous participants at Murewa in 1983 was Ndumbe Eyoh, who would be inspired to organize the Kumba workshop the following year. The Kumba workshop, itself a unique workshop, was rooted in Eyoh's belief that with the social, economic and political challenges his society was facing, he could make himself more useful to his people and that popular theatre could be of tremendous help in this direction. Little surprise therefore that barely a year after Murewa in Zimbabwe came Kumba. Kumba resulted in a performance that brought together three rival villages of Kake, Konye and Kurume taking the resolve to pull together their resources to construct a bridge that would replace a precariously hanging hammock that linked the rival villages to the main farmland on the other side of the River Moungo. Repairing the hammock had been problematic in the past, and the rivalry amongst the villages did not make matters any better. Thus, and as seen by Eyoh (1989) in "From Kamarithu to Kumba: Methodologies in Popular Theatre Practice" like Kamiriithu, Kumba restored a sense of confidence in the people of Kake, Konye and Kurume, even if briefly. One of the key resource persons who participated in the Kumba workshop, Penina Mlamla (1992, 108), eloquently paints a detailed picture of the precarious setting they had to work in and what exactly they did to provide hitherto conflict-ridden communities in the Kumba area with a fertile ground for concerted actions for a healthier living condition:

We were assigned to go to this village by the name of Konye. But when we arrived there we found that Konye was really one, and not only was it three different villages, though

physically it looked like one, but these were three different villages that were not getting along together. Actually, there was a lot of antagonism between the three villages which made it impossible for them to solve some of their basic developmental problems. And we found out that the three villages had a number of problems which were very similar and in some cases the same. The major problem was that they needed a bridge across the River Moungo which runs just behind the villages. This river divides the villages in a very interesting way because all the farmlands are on the other side of the river and the villagers are on the other side. This is a very big river which spans some thirty metres and to cross it, the villagers use a locally constructed hammock, a sort of bridge which is very dangerous because once in a while it actually breaks and people fall into the river and drown. They also had problems such as the lack of pipe-borne water, but this is also linked to the bridge, since the villagers pointed out that there are many springs across the river from where they could obtain good drinking water. There were other developmental problems, but the bridge turned out to be the most crucial. The main problem however, was that they could not get together; they could not unite to solve their problems. They needed to get together to try to resolve their differences and to solve their problems...

We just asked them to discuss the matter and tell us how they would solve the problem between the brothers. Of course this worked well because it broke the ice. Immediately, they realised that we were talking about them. They said we were trying to portray their own problem and immediately they said they understood that we were trying to mirror their own disunity and they took it very nicely. They went into discussing the thrust of the story and they agreed that the brothers were being stupid. The villagers very much appreciated this and expressed their gratitude for what we had tried to do by bringing them together. They promised

they would forget their differences by forming a committee consisting of members of the three villages, that this would be an ad-hoc committee. This committee comprised twelve people. The committee decided to meet the following day and when it met with the workshop participants, the committee tried to chart out the strategies for the building of the bridge. We actually were amazed by the enthusiasm of the villages. The meeting was very successful because they came out with concrete proposals on how they were going to go about the bridge project. And the basic thing was for them to mobilize the villagers to contribute funds which would constitute the basic percentage that was needed to start a self-help project in the village. And by the time we left this village, this committee had started working and even at the meeting, members of the committee began making their contributions because people said that they were going to go ahead with the building of the bridge.

The process lucidly described here by Mlamla consists of three stages, ranging from data collection and analysis through group dynamics and dramatic skills including improvisation, to post performance discussion that generates critical awareness and mobilization for change. The workshop participants succeed in underscoring the need for change and the necessity of bringing it about with the full participation of the people for whom change is intended. Here theatre was being employed as an education process that provides interactive learning, a process that triggered questions about reality and sought collective solutions to common problems.

Nothing would be heard or done about Development Theatre in Cameroon until 1997. One of the driving forces behind the re-emergence of Development Theatre practice in Cameroon was Women's Information and Coordination Office, hereafter referred to as WICO. WICO is an umbrella organisation that comprises many common initiative groupings and women's associations in the North West Region of Cameroon with branches in Bamenda, Ndop, Batibo

and other villages. The objective of WICO is to educate the women of these villages and town to be conscious of their potential and to contribute to the economic, political and social advancement of their communities. According to a report by Bole Butake and Jane Mbacham (1997) on the first Development Theatre workshop titled *Empowering Women through Theatre*, after watching one of their performances in the Catholic Mission hall at the Big Mankon cathedral, the then coordinator of WICO Bamenda, Mrs. Elizabeth Hartwig, who had been exploring other methods of sensitizing the masses, expressed her excitement about the fact that theatre could be employed as a tool for educating and conscientising the masses. Mrs. Hartwig's realisation of how powerful a tool theatre could be in educating the masses inspired her to solicit funds from WICO's primary sponsor, Helvetas, for further experimentation on Development Theatre. The then director of Helvetas, Mr. Thomas Burge, accepted the proposal, and this resulted in a total of thirteen WICO-sponsored Development Theatre Workshops between 1997 and 2001. According to Samba (2005, 31) who participated in all but one of the thirteen workshops as a resource person, some of the workshops were women-only, others involved women and men, and yet, some with primary school pupils and their teachers.

The WICO-funded Bamenda and Batibo workshops that took place from 9th through the 11th of January 1997 and 25th January through 5th March 1997 had as their primary objective to train participants on the various techniques of Development Theatre thereby empowering them via theatre (Bole Butake and Jane Mbacham, 1997, 5). Typical of what obtains in Development Theatre workshops as in the case of Amadu Bello, there were differences at the levels of outcome and reactions despite the fact that the two workshops were on the same themes and the same methodology.

Like their counterparts in the North West Region of Cameroon, the women of the South West Region are mobilising themselves in different groupings to identify their common concerns and alternative approaches to these concerns. Amongst these groupings is the Nkong Hill Top Common Initiative Group that has as main

objective the improvement of the economic status of men and women in the community. Before 1999 the group had used lectures and discussions as its main medium of education. An opportunity offered itself in October 1999 when members of the group chose for their own contribution to the celebration of the International Rural Women's Day a play that reflected the challenges of women of their community. According to Samba (2005, 109) the theme of the play, "Give Credit to the Rural Women" was provided by The World's Women Summit Foundation.

Another workshop was held in Yaounde on the 18th of May 2001 at the Jean XXXIII Centre at Mvolye. The objective of the workshop was to open-up dialogue on the controversial topic of female circumcision and/or female genital mutilation. Organised by the International Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, (CI-of Cameroon), the workshop brought together social workers, practitioners and victims of female circumcision, journalists, teachers and lawyers (Samba, 2005, 116).

Thus Cameroon has made and continues to make its mark in the area of Development Theatre in Africa. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that long before the Eyoh-initiated Kumba workshop religious, cultural and social groupings were staging plays and sketches that were educational, even if the Development Theatre attribute was not tagged on them.

Development Theatre for Community Education

As established earlier in this chapter, African theatre, especially traditional African theatre, played an intrinsic utilitarian role in the society. It would take close to two decades after independence for experts to recognize and start experimenting with the potential of theatre in mass mobilization in postcolonial Africa. Informed in part by the Brazilian popular educationists Paolo Freire (1972) and Augusto Boal (1974), who had extensively practised and researched the subject in South America, African theatre practitioners started

using the rich indigenous performing traditions as a crucial ground for breeding meaningful social change. In spite of the drawbacks occasioned largely by the neo-colonial enterprise, it served and has continued to serve very relevant social functions in communities. Development Theatre is being employed in community education initiatives to mobilize and educate the voiceless in African communities, most of whom do not have access to education as a cultural pedagogical practice as obtained within school and University systems or in the mass media. Extrapolating the functional role of this new theatre in Africa today, Ross Kidd (1979, 6) who has been simultaneously relentless as a practitioner and a theoretician of Development Theatre in Africa chronicles the relevance of the practice:

The performing arts are able to provide an objectification of reality, a means of mirroring reality in order to stand back and study it creatively. In this case drama attempts to show not only the immediate situation but the larger socio-political system of which it is a part. The particular strength of drama is its capacity to portray conflict, which lends itself to a dialectical reading of the world, revealing the underlying class relationships and structures which influence the social situation. This view of the world must be consolidated and sharpened through dialogue: the role of drama in this case is not to provide a finished view of the world, to prescribe the answers but to engage the audience itself in the production of meaning, in finishing or resolving the drama.

Therefore, Development Theatre does not aim at a result. It aims at the process that would lead to a series of events that constitutes action and reaction for change that is yearned for. It creates an avenue for people to address issues of concern in their lives. In corroborating Kidd, Eyoh (1986, 102), reminds us of the potential of that audience we might want to take for granted:

The theatre by its very nature and particularly because of its communality and fictionalized situations provides a forum whereby communication between members of the same community and between them and those others without who intervene in the community's life can take place without the attendant antagonisms which would normally occur in a directly realistic situation. Many theatre practitioners and adults and educators have sought to rediscover theatre's potential as a mobilisational tool. Theatre is being used in Africa today to stimulate community thinking, develop self-confidence, participation, expression, awareness and organizational strengths of popular groups, communities and organizations. Popular theatre builds on the skills the people already have; the actors provide the songs, choreography and the dances, create the scenario and are responsible for the themes to be developed.

The use of theatre to mobilize and trigger critical thoughts within an otherwise dismembered members of the society is germane to Development Theatre. As an enlightening process, it brings ensemble the entertainment potential of performing arts with the goal of showcasing issues crucial to the health of the community. A performance by the people would invariably attract their critical attention to their common problems in a manner challenging to their initial perception of the situation. They would then be motivated to give the situation a new look and brainstorm on possible solutions for their own good. In this manner, Byram et al (1978, 78) see in theatre a two-prong communication process of theatre serving as a catalyst by provoking discussions on issues and as an agent of action as it provokes the involvement of people in acting on those issues that are important in and for their livelihood.

In so employing theatre as a vehicle for mass education, the enactment basically serves as an accelerator intended to trigger critical reflection that leads to the affirmation of faith in the people's sense of belonging and belief in themselves. Moreover, by exploring the

people's social reality in an all-inclusive manner, community participation is encouraged. Many people who would normally not heed a call for their input in a communal project would feel energized to do it with a strong sense of self-confidence. Development Theatre has the potential of influencing community education in many ways than any medium of communication would. These areas include, and are not limited to, non-formal education, health education campaigns, agricultural extension campaigns, community Development Projects intended to motivate self-help and mass sensitization campaign (Kidd, 1982, 18).

Whereas it is obvious (as earlier indicated) that the works of Paolo Freire and Augusto Boal had a tremendous impact on African theatre practitioners, The South American setting that motivated them does not in any way harbour the same socio-economic climate as Africa although the effect of the colonial experience and imperialism are common in both settings. Boal's classic, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1985), is an insightful theory on revolutionary consciousness via theatre that makes Boal a major innovator of post-Brechtian theatre. Augusto Boal lectured, conducted workshops, and mounted productions through out South America. In the nineteen seventies he came under a series of attacks from the Brazilian government. The attack ranged from torture, imprisonment to exile. Even this would not derail his effort at working for the underclass in South America as he continued to use theatre as a vehicle in creating a revolutionary consciousness particularly within the working class. Boal demonstrably drew the attention of the people to the physical effects of the exploitative working conditions on their bodies. This practical demonstration brought to the participants a more practical insight into their poor working conditions and opened up the avenue for interaction, an action that would invariably lead to their common good. Augusto Boal's theory has been applied in several parts of the world with doses of local reality as dictated by the economic, social and political context it is being implemented in.

Given the difference between the two settings, Byram et al (1978, 18) are quick to narrate the peculiarity of the African experience by

summarising the activity of popular theatre practitioners in Africa as follows:

Beginning with the travelling theatres launched by various Universities in the sixties and seventies whereby groups of students took ready-made plays to rural audiences in an attempt to break away from the urban-based elitist theatre, 58 popular theatre developed out of mass sensitization campaigns carried out in countries like Ghana, Uganda, Kenya and Malawi where dramatizations were used to propagate various policies. It was however, not until 1973 when, in Botswana, a coherent attempt was made by some adult educators including Ross Kidd, Martin Byram and Petra Roh-Rouendall who launched an annual campaign called "The Laedza Batanani" as part of an extension programme in community education using theatre. The Laedza Batanani was a one-week programme involving performances by a mobile team of actors followed by community discussion. As much as possible the organization involved the community at every level. The programme often began with problem (e.g. vegetable production, nutrition, cooking practices, venereal diseases etc.) followed by scenario-making, rehearsal, performance, discussion and follow-up.

Given the potential of Social theatre as demonstrated by these troops, it became clear that theatre would be a major stakeholder in the educational, mobilisational and collective action process because through it the masses could bring to the fold issues about their fears, hopes and inadequacies. It became easier to discuss the issues and mobilize themselves for communal actions and reactions.

From Laedza Batanani in Botswana and Chakwakwa in Zambia through Mulewa in Zimbabwe and the string of workshops like Samura in Nigeria, Kamiriithu in Kenya and Kumba in Cameroon, we find the manner in which Africa's rich indigenous performing traditions are being explored and exploited to mobilize and

conscientise the masses in the continent. Within the context of popular organisation and struggle, these workshops play a set of roles: they bring people of the same community together thereby building a sense of solidarity and a sense of consciousness. It creates an avenue for members of the community to share in discussions about an issue that emerged out of a performance or within the study group during a workshop discussion session. These would invariably lead to drawing out people's dissatisfaction, questioning what is normally accepted, voicing a people's protest, poking fun at oppressors, overcoming a people's fears and stirring their emotions; clarifying a target for a specific struggle and assuring massive support; working out the strategies and tactics of struggle, rehearsing struggle and building confidence; raising morale and solidarity on the picket line, evaluating the struggle (Kidd, 1979, 23).

As demonstrated in the aforementioned workshops, theatre is making people to focus on the problems in a manner that challenges the way in which they perceive themselves and their lives. As seen in all the workshops in all the countries, different communities have their peculiarities that require different approaches. We find that theatre is being used to explore social reality thereby encouraging audience participation in crucial issues in the local peoples' lives. The underlying reality in these experimentations is that theatre has been used as a vehicle for mass mobilization and conscientisation. Such a gainful practice in theatre in Africa has not come without factors that impede it.

Setbacks in Development Theatre Effects

Although several invigorating experiments on Development Theatre have been carried out on the continent with varying degrees of success in raising awareness amongst Africa's wretched of the earth, things have continued to look gloomy and in some cases hopeless. Kidd (1983, 287), corroborated by Eyoh (1999, 95) holds that popular theatre often claims to be a means of social transformation via protest and struggle, but it seldom challenges the

establishment in any significant way. To Kidd, the theatre pretty much becomes as marginalized as the masses it represents, or claims to represent, with very little if any impact on the society at large. The new trend now is that while providing the space for peasants and workers in Africa to analyse their reality and act out their understanding of their situation rather than bottle it up, approaches have become less radical, less confrontational and much more pragmatic even if with little or no impact still. It is Eyoh's contention that:

Whether in the Chalimbanda project in Zambia (David Kerr and Stephen Chifunyise, 1979), the Ahmadou Bello Theatre Collective (Ross Kidd, 1982), the Malya project in Zimbabwe (Ross Kidd, 1984; Oga Abah, 1985; Ndumbe Eyoh, 1984), The Kumba Project (Ndumbe Eyoh, 1984, 1986, Bole Butake, 1986; Tar Ahura, 1986), the trend seems to be moving towards assisting village communities with developing a better awareness of their milieu. Development theatre is becoming more and more an enabling process although the ultimate objective of handing over control of the medium to the people is yet to be achieved.

These reservations are understandable when one takes a critical look at some of the workshops. There are glaring impediments to the avowed procedures and goals of the practices of Development Theatre. Such hurdles include the inherent contradiction embedded in the concept being triggered and spearheaded by persons who are not part of the masses per se, the usual cursory nature of the workshops, the culture-specific nature of the practice itself and donor influence on the form and content, which tendency may not augur well with the underlying principles and goals of Development Theatre.

Kidd and Byram (1983) identify a major setback when they begin to appreciate the Laedza Batanani project discussed earlier. The management of the project, they state, was wholly in the hands of the local and external elite. The peasant farmers who were the targeted beneficiaries of the project were shoved to the background by local community leaders and government officials. Thus there were no

expected major changes in social relations, a tendency that did not augur well for the goals of a project that set out to liberate and give a voice to those peasant workers.

In the same vein, Kamiriithuu was not a wholly peasant-controlled project. Ngugi wa Miri and Ngugi wa Thiongo, experts not in any way part of the peasantry or the workers in that community, conceived a play which addressed themes that were sensitive to many of the problems faced by the peasantry and workers in that locality. With “Ngahika Ndenda” came a social perception that quickly engulfed the community and got the people poised at venting their wrath, but the major ideas were emanating from Ngugi and Ngugi’s pre-scripts, despite the twists and modifications that must have obtained during the performance. At any rate, the script was an expression of the people’s fundamental concerns, and coming with local colour only rendered it even more meaningful to them, the shortcoming notwithstanding.

Notwithstanding the popularity and ‘success’ of Murewa, Zimbabwe in 1983 as observed by Chifinyisse (1999, 276), Kimani Gecau (1991, 66) and Ngugi wa Miri (1991, 136), a couple of factors rendered the experiment less productive. Byram (1999, 116) charges that there was no follow-up to the programme, and that it was unable to encourage the ideal that it had deliberately set out to inculcate. Hear Byram (116):

Through this workshop, several participants have openly disagreed. Dickson Mwansa, a Zambian adult-educator, argued that it balkanized the momentum meant to create a global movement. Theatre artists such as Penina Mlama and Ndumbe Eyoh maintained that the workshop was unable to establish a base for community theatre in Murewa and resembled what Kidd once identified as an “outside in approach”... As was typical with this style of Theatre for Development, with the projects being so departmentalized, the results differed from one group to another. Eyoh felt that the language problems, though invigorating, also limited the

process. Others argued that the number of participants and the designated area of the project were too large and had thus hindered the programme's effectiveness. Thompson Tsodzo, though he did not participate in the project, felt that the project had made "guinea pigs" of the people of Murewa, affording them no substantial programme of action but allowing the foreign participants to engage in another intellectual exercise.

The impact here is that despite the enthusiasm usually sparked off by the initiatives, they have continued to be cursory projects because pretty often the framework left by the experiments are not followed up with any enthusiasm by the local people. Thus the projects have been largely one-off affairs where the enthusiasm dies down as the experts pack their bags out of each of the projects. Moreover, in all the Development Theatre experiments mentioned this far, the initiation and management tend to come from people of the middle class who are mainly either from the University settings or from donor organizations with little if any practical touch with the local realities. Their petit-bourgeois character (reflected in their attire and sometimes in their manner of articulation) and their facilitating duty that could be difficult to distinguish from superiority of sorts tend to brand them as intruders. These do not establish that required fertile atmosphere for the practice.

Although Development Theatre experiences have to provoke or trigger the thoughts and perceptions that would help deepen the understanding of a people's social reality, there is a dire need for a mechanism that would sustain the steam after a given project. This is what Eyoh's (1999) detail and extensive evaluation of the Kumba workshop ten years after seems to suggest. In "Popular Theatre Re-visited" (1999), Eyoh chronicles the history and development of Development Theatre in Africa and his personal involvement in the practice with a keen attention on the Kumba Workshop in 1984 which he initiated. Ten years after Kumba, the attitude of the people of Kake, Konye and Kurume had not changed, and Eyoh finds

himself questioning if the workshop was not well anchored. To him, Africa is either “dying or is dead” (97), and he begins to get the feeling that not even theatre can heal the continent’s wounds. Eyoh’s frustration is rooted in his unprecedented participation in an entirely different form of theatre practice in Kumba ten years after The Kumba Workshop; hear Eyoh (1999, 107):

The situation I met is indeed extremely theatrical, but only in a bureaucratic manner. It is, of course, played by the same people we were with in 1984, but this time, they are no longer our participatory audience but only observers. Their participation is limited to handclapping as one vacuous speech after another is pronounced by the assembly of bureaucrats. But new elections were at hand. Traditional dances had been mobilized. Choirs were there. People came out in colourful party uniforms embossed with the effigy of their leaders. The local chiefs were all present, resplendent in their traditional paraphernalia, and there was electricity in the air generated by the pulsating rhythms of the tam-tams. There was pomp and circumstance. The national TV was at hand to cover the event. We were all there. The speeches were many and full of histrionics. The promises were plentiful. This was Cameroonian culture at its finest manifestation. But cultural action was changing nothing. Cultural action was being put to celebrate the very structures that were responsible for its demise... I asked myself where the empowerment we thought we had achieved ten years ago was?... I looked for one of those who had taken an active part in the workshop in 1984 and asked him to accompany me to the bridge. His amusement to the idea of the bridge did not alert me to the site that awaited me. My disappointment was total. Ten years later, there was no bridge. Rather the canes that were used to construct the hammock gaped at me not in their exquisite waves and webs but in a cacophony of cut edges. I dared not go across for fear I would be sacrificed to the gods that lay

hungry in the depths of the river below, waiting to swallow me for my sacrilege ten years before. Gathered together we tried to recreate what had happened.

Evidently, to many of these villagers who are now in another form of theatre and in a distant time from 1984, the Kumba 1984 workshop was just something of the past that meant little or nothing in the present. The Kumba workshop resource persons had not left any structure that was going to sustain the initiative, and as Eyoh himself admits, they had come to this area with sufficient means to discourage the villagers from continuing with the process they had started with lots of momentum. Bole Butake (1984, 189) identifies more than this in Kumba:

While living with the villagers was a process of identification and acceptance which yielded a lot of dividends when it came to data collection, story improvisation and even performance, the optimum could not be achieved because of the effects of ‘clustering’, whereby most of the participants not only lived together but tended to pursue most other activities together. More so, the methodology would have succeeded even more if the workshop had been a bit longer. The actual time spent in the village (six days out of sixteen) was rather short to allow for sufficient digging into deepen collective understanding of the contradictions and constraints in the community...

These shortcomings notwithstanding, a sense of awareness and a resolve had been triggered by the Kumba workshop as Eyoh (109) posits:

Yet the villagers remembered fondly how the workshop changed their perception. They remembered how the process of analysis which resulted in the dramatization had changed their world view. Some of them remembered quite

remarkably the details of the process. And many of them had become articulate in these days of multi-partism, challenging the various party representatives on their status in the political agenda.

Drawing from Mlama's lucid presentation of what obtained in Kumba, Eyoh's disappointment with the trend ten years after and Butake's earlier appreciation of the experiment, and despite the good intentions behind the Kumba theatre project, a major set back in Development Theatre as a whole seems occasioned by the inherent approaches that result in theatre being domesticated or being perceived as a tool for confrontation. Tar Ahura (1986) is quick to remind us that:

Popular theatre which started as praxis for offering challenges to oppressive structures so that human beings can achieve self-dignity and self-realization especially in societies that have suffered heavy fragmentation and class division has, over the years in Africa, shifted its emphasis. Now it seeks to offer rural man new ways of looking at development, new ways of using available tools and materials for greater productivity and profit; in fact, new ways of mastering the available rural environment especially for productive purposes. On the surface, this may appear like distinguishing without a difference. Yet, there is a subtle difference. The radical, and indeed the ideological aspects are moving out of popular theatre in Africa and now it seems the concern is more with modernizing development strategies so as to remove the clichéd stereotyped characterization that have been in practice so that greater productivity and profit can be achieved. The emphasis also seems to be on providing services and ensuring basic needs which to me, is nothing more than encouraging the growth of a bureaucratic system that ensures new skilful ways of exploitation. As Stephen Chifunyise put it in Kumba during one of the sessions,

‘popular theatre does not have to be confrontational.’ This appears to be the spirit that informs popular theatre in Africa now.

This is the dilemma faced by Development Theatre practitioners in Africa, a dilemma that does not only impair the practice but extends to the very *raison d’être* of art as a whole to man and the society.

The general approach in these workshops in Africa borders on researching within a given community, analyzing the data to get an insight into the contradictions lived by the people, setting up a stage on which to illustrate the issues, staging a performance followed by a discussion and eventual mobilization for action. This approach tends to see the project as an initiator in a sense not part of the long-run results of the projects, and this perception to the people does not augur well for the goal of Development Theatre practice. In addition, the emphasis on performances that draw almost entirely from particular issues tends to limit the usually limitless experiences in life. When such experiences are limited to particular ones that argue for problem-posing, they can become dragooning and therefore, counter-productive.

The issues addressed in most of the Development Theatre workshops discussed here are not imposed by the research persons who are generally coming from outside. The facilitators did not take with them their pre-conceived ideas into that marginalised urban area or remote village. Consequently, the themes to be worked on can only emerge from the process of data collection and analysis. The risk in this is that input brought by the facilitators may not match with the outcome of the data and its analysis. The people might not necessarily bring to the fold obvious community challenges that the resource persons are privy to and would like to address for the progress of the community. This is the problem with the culture-specific character of Development Theatre workshops in Africa.

David Kerr has clinically pinpointed the major drawback in Development Theatre practice in Africa by pitching it vis-à-vis the practice as obtained in Latin America. Kerr (1982, 66) asserts:

Unlike in Latin America where popular theatre often lies within the hands of the people's institutions, popular drama in Africa has been almost exclusively organised by academics and development officers within government-monitored bureaucracies. The situation has led to the debate about the roles the intellectuals play in African popular theatre. One view, fuelled by the reluctance of the Kamiriithu to continue with drama after March 1982, is that intellectuals, even when they are most committed to people's cause, are ultimately petit-bourgeois and therefore incapable of providing solid leadership to workers and peasants by theatre movements during periods of intense class struggle.

Ross Kidd (1983, 22) brings another intriguing perspective in the conversation about the pitfalls of Development Theatre in Africa: "It is not enough simply to express problems through theatre if this is not linked with critical analysis of an action on the underlying causes and structures, it is not enough to rehearse struggle if this does not lead to struggle."

If the practices in Kamiriithu, Mulewa or Kumba, as examples, are pursued by ensuring post initiation/performance follow-up, it will not only give the different target peasant and working class people a new sense of purpose; it will also provide them with the rationale for living.

Michael Ethererton (1983, 87) posits that Theatre for Development, even that which might not be popular, approaches theatre from the side of the audience, and consumption is the major concern. Ethererton's focus is with the audience and its transformation. However, his assertion that consumption is the primary concern of Development Theatre is confusing; it points to the failure of the practice to reach its stated goals of changing the

lives of the audience as indicated by Eyoh (1989) and Kidds (1993). Taking another look at some more practices across Africa between 1972 and 1998 reveals the limitations of Theatre for Development. Osita Okagbu (1999, 24) charges that Theatre for Development carries with it the dangers that it totally negates what should be its existential imperative, which is to transform the audience into makers and owners of the theatre events and consumers of its product. He continues:

My conception of Theatre for Development, inspired and informed as it is by the liberatory pedagogy of Paolo Freire, the 'theatre of the oppressed' aesthetics of Augusto Boal and a traditional African theatre aesthetic, finds a basic contradiction in the capitalist philosophy for theatre which seeks to make a distinction between the spectators and the performers, and thereby turning the former into consumers of the product of the latter. As Freire points out, his 'pedagogy of the oppressed' is one 'which must be forged with, not for' the oppressed (be they individuals or whole peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed and from their reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation.

Because Theatre for Development practices in Africa have for the most part been operated by out-side interventions that set out to provide the targeted communities with products that always seem to be already parcelled-up and ready only for consumption, it is too distant from the model put forth by Okagbu. The pre-occupying question thus remains: Can this theatre really empower or liberate the audience? As Eyoh (1993), and later Kidd, have argued (pointing to specific practices) Theatre for Development in Africa has not effectively liberated the oppressed as its leit-motif spells out. Kidd's postulates:

The majority of Theatre for Development programmes and practices in Africa seem not to be aiming to achieve the transformation of the theatre process into a potential context and the theatre itself into a language of exploration and expression for the deprived communities and villages in which their Theatre for Development activities are pitched; and that even when and where they are aiming to achieve this objective, they are, in the main, unable to do so. There are many reasons which can be put forward to account for this unfortunate situation.

Besides the Kamiriithu and the Kumba experiences detailed earlier in this chapter, the experience and experimentation in Ghana speaks neatly to Kidd's assessment above. The influence of governments and non-governmental organizations also mentioned earlier (though not exhaustively explored) remains one of the major hurdles faced by the practice in Africa. The major problem here borders on funding as often the rapport between the non-governmental organizations or the governments and the Development Theatre practitioners is usually tainted by the donors wanting to influence the style and some times the content of the practice. In a detailed articulation of his personal experience in Ghana where he served as a Development Theatre consultant, Osita Okagbu states that the government through its non-formal education department had already completed a pilot programme of functional literacy drive in which theatre, especially role-play, had featured prominently as part of the adult literacy programme. The relative success registered by the project motivated the government and the international funding agencies to broaden the functional adult literacy programme and make it a national programme. From this stand-point Okagbu, who is grounded with the perception of Development Theatre as an in-side-out practice that focuses on the process and not the product, found a point of divergence between him and the

government of Ghana that was the primary sponsor of the project. Hear Okagbu:

From the start I was convinced that the government's approach was very limiting and restrictive as it confined the theatre input to mere role-play situations and usage within the functional literacy programme. I personally did not see any scope or prospects in this approach which I did not consider to be Theatre for Development and when I spoke to members of the theatre unit (a unit with the non-formal education division formed to coordinate the theatre activities of the division) whose responsibility it was going to be to maintain a sustained programme of theatre activities throughout the country, I also found that their own understanding and philosophy of theatre for development was firmly located within the domain of the agit-ptop mode of theatre, an interventionist form of theatre which inevitably can become a pliable instrument for the government to use in pursuance of its avowed development objectives. There was, therefore, basically no tension or conflict in the two views as they both are essentially concerned or view theatre as a message-bearing medium without any concern for the politics of the source. My own position does not in actual fact deny or challenge the validity of their views as I firmly believe that theatre as a form of cultural action is almost always loaded with messages and possible meanings which an audience can read into or out of it, whether these messages or meanings or meanings are intended or are unintentional is quite beside the point.

Osagbu's position here is to take the views to a different realm wherein the matter concerning the message being carried, who is carrying it, who takes responsibility for it and the way it is carried would not only be crucial but would be more important than the actual message being carried. He was making sure the practice did not end up being another medium of effective indoctrination as radio and

television had proven to be in post colonial African States that are on the most part replete with dictatorship and undemocratic governance.

It is clear here that Okagbu's is a sharply different approach to Development Theatre practice from that of the government. The primary difference between his conception of the practice and that of the theatre unit and the government is that he lays emphasis on process, while the government focuses on a spelled-out development project that needs results to show the success or failure of the practice. Okagbu holds that to foster people-centred development goals, the Ghanaian government may have reservations, given the likelihood of chaos and anarchy which a critical consciousness emanating from a down-up mass-educational approach embedded in Development Theatre practice can bring. Paulo Friere has argued that people, especially those in power, rarely admit their fear of freedom openly. Rather, they tend to camouflage it sometimes consciously by presenting themselves as defenders of freedom. These leaders would give their doubts and misgivings an air of profound sobriety, as befitting custodians of freedom. Freier elaborates that these leaders confuse freedom with the maintenance of the status quo in such a way that if conscientisation threatens to question the status quo, it thereby seems to constitute a threat to freedom itself. This is the crossroads where those in power in Africa find themselves, the difficulty of spearheading development initiatives and practices such as popular education programs intended to foster or improve the livelihood of the masses that are likely to know too much to want to demand social change. These leaders are therefore seen as suspects, for it becomes difficult to admit that they genuinely want the masses to develop critical consciousness that would enable them to come to terms with the intricacies of their underdevelopment amidst plenty of resources. Focusing on the case of Ghana in particular, Okagbu expresses his thoughts succinctly. Inter alia, he says:

In the case of Ghana, as in many other African countries with masses of deprived, would those in power really want

the masses to see clearly that there usually is a correlation between their poverty and deprivation and the relative influence and the relative influence of those in positions of authority, whether political or economic? Can these really genuinely want to abolish social inequality and relations of privilege and deprivation in the society? Would it not amount to committing class suicide to giving up their privileges and power? I personally do not believe we have such altruists and revolutionaries among our politicians and all others in positions of power who would want and set in motion a process that would ultimately lead to an egalitarian social order in which there are no haves and have-nots, in which there are no subjects and objects of the historical process. These were the questions and issues that confronted me during my stay in Ghana, and my final conclusion was that it was obviously just lip-service which was being paid to these and other initiatives and processes of liberation by the political and economic elite who controlled policy in Ghana.

This setting readily creates plenty of hurdles to Development Theatre practice, given its underlying goal of providing an avenue for the deprived masses to mobilize and face the realities of their situation. The government or donor agencies would continue to explore and exploit the practice for long-run maintenance of the status quo. They set the agenda for the practice and remotely control the entire process for the interest of the establishment that wants to maintain its grip on power. This workshop was officially opened by the government-appointed official in charge of the Non-formal Education Division. In his address the latter emphasised the convergence between government developmental policies and those of the to-be-created Theatre for development programme. Ironically, but not surprisingly, it was the same director who completely rejected the management structure that came from the management workshop which would have been the best for ensuring the continued programme of Theatre for Development activities

throughout the regions. The official rejected this structure because it gave control over form and content to the respective communities to develop their own programmes based on their distinctive realities, the people for whom the workshops set out to give a voice (Okagbu, 27). Consequently, Development Theatre ceased from being that celebrated avenue in which issues of relevance to the common man are explored, negotiated and eventually resolved as the practitioners end up repeating the pro-establishment's one-way flow of information from top to bottom. The traditional African performances seen earlier in this chapter (like the case of Pungwe in Zimbabwe and the Kgola in Botswana) could not be as vibrant and productive as in the pre-colonial and the early days of independence. In lieu of these performances emerges this distasteful scenario in Ghana.

The manifested suffering and powerlessness in Kamiriithu, the lethargy and strong sense of loss in Mulewa, the deep-seated animosity and desperation in Kumba and the frustration in Ghana are not limited to these areas. These are only a reflection of a bigger picture of Africa that tells of a continent brandishing a begging bowl that constantly leaks. It is from this premise that we concur with Eyoh's doubt about the effectiveness of Development Theatre as a tool for effective change, and it is in an effort to address the questions embedded in such fears that we propose an alternative approach to Development Theatre that focuses on Radio Drama.

Revisionist Literature

Beside the emergence of Development Theatre as an attempt to use literature to fight social injustice, there has also been the avowed 'literature of combat' that sees the writer as a combatant in the battle field, fighting for freedom and social justice in a chaotic postcolonial setting. The idea is born of the tendency among writers and critics of African literature to focus their attention on 'the burning issues of the day' while neglecting the invaluable heritage on which such contemporary issues owe their foundation, even if imperceptibly.

Fuelled by discontent with colonial and postcolonial dictatorship and resultant social distress, the African writer's outburst has for the most part been deafening. The literature is largely inspired by the zeal to change the social order that is essentially anti-people and almost always pro-establishment. Such a determination to command attention to the plight of the people is what sells the resounding rubric, 'Literature of combat' which is in turn corroborated by the (in)famous clichés that hinges on: 'not chasing the rat while the house is on fire'. Such a utilitarian perception of literature provides grounds for another hopelessly bogged concept in contemporary African literary discourse: "revision" and/or "writing back"¹². For more than half a century, plenty of such literature has been written and much more has been said and written about it while the continent remains at the blink of collapse.

Simon Gikaandi (1983, 162) casts doubt on the avowed aim of the African intellectual. He charges that the African writer's struggle is essentially a personal struggle though he/she publicly declares him/herself as playing a much more influential sacred role in his society. The African writer, Gikaandi states, is involved in what is essentially a conflict between the artistic elite and the new political masters who have ejected him/her from the dining table of the post independence era. What one takes for a revolt on the part of the writer is presumably a lament and an attempt to get a compromised position on the national table. Gikaandi, like Lazarus Neal (1990) substantiates the split between the intellectual and the nationalist politician who had, in one voice, fought fiercely for the new nation during the struggle for independence. Neal Lazarus sees the writers' frustration both in terms of their reaction to being dismembered from the national elite corps and their deferred dream of the plenty that was expected to come with the acquisition of independence. Lazarus' explanation of the shift in the bearing of African literature

¹² Reactions to colonialist discursive historiography have been described as a revision and an act of writing back in a bid to correct the misrepresentation that obtains in colonialist writing. See for example, the symptomatic work of Helen Tiffin et al (eds) with the title: *The Empire writes Back*.

from a nationalist literature to a revolutionary literature is profound. The writers, he contends, are too militant in their 'quest for change: Thus they fail to grasp the nitty-gritties of postcolonial confusion. Gikaandi and Lazarus charge with good authority and for laudable reasons. Perhaps even more telling is Ngugi wa Thiongo's (1986, 72) recognition of the lacunae created by literature of combat. As he becomes increasingly concerned about the rural masses and what writers should do to effect change, he does not end with playing a major role at Kamiriithu. He laments: "I knew whom I was writing about, but who was I writing for?"¹³

It is within this background of a dire need for utilitarian literature that theatre, from the nineteen seventies on, has become associated with development strategies fostered by the contemporary perception of development that prescribes mass and/or popular education as its point of departure. If the concept of Development Theatre as a whole brings a salutary twist to the business of enhancing the longstanding goal of literature of combat or revisionist literature, Radio Drama offers an even more fertile avenue for the writer and critic to render literature useful to the people. Since mainstream African literature tends to be geared at changing the changers of the society, the endeavour is counter-productive. The take-off point for a productive endeavour would be to take the people, the masses that is, in the same boat of struggle by way of producing genres that emanate from them and speak to them directly.

It is obvious that Literature of Combat has not met its avowed goals. Development theatre has come with relative success, and Radio Drama would be an invaluable alternative to this new theatre in Africa as the modern marvel which the mass media offers in the business of communication takes theatre and its capacity to admirable success.

¹³ See Thiongo, Wa, Ngugi. *Decolonising the Mind*. Nairobi: Heinemann, 1986, 72.

Chapter Four

African Radio Drama as Theatre for the Multitude

The centrality of radio for reaching and impacting on audiences that are often otherwise difficult to reach is one of the marvels of modern science. People who are socially and geographically isolated are taken out of their isolation by radio broadcasts. In Africa, like most parts of the developing world, community radio¹⁴ is the basic and popular communication medium for millions of people at the grassroots level. It is an effective communication vehicle which at times helps in identifying development needs at local levels. It brings parts of the otherwise hidden or ignored local traditions to the limelight. Community radio, unlike national radio, is geared towards local needs. Since its coming to Africa in the colonial days till today, radio has played a significant, albeit insufficient role in entertaining, educating and informing the people. As mass media, it could be better employed in not only for corroborating the “writing back”¹⁵ process began by the early writers of African literature, but also in bringing to the fold those invaluable but often fading cultural artefacts that western influence has rendered moribund. This chapter explores this productive relationship between radio and local culture while investigating the lapses that obtain in Sub Saharan Africa.

¹⁴ The language spoken in community radio is that of the common man. If it is English Language, it is hardly standard expression given that the objective of the radio is to reach the common man. In some cases the language spoken on the community radio is the local dialect. National radio on the other hand adopts the standard official languages. In the case of Cameroon it is French and English although there are occasions when local languages are used on the regional stations of the State-run Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation (CRTV).

¹⁵ Reactions to colonialist discursive historiography by African writers have been described as a revision and an act of writing back in a bid to correct the misrepresentation that obtains in colonialist writing. See for example, the symptomatic work of Helen Tiffin et al (eds) with the title: *The Empire writes Back*

Literature and the Media

In *The Press in Africa* (1987), Ainslie Rosalynde asserts that he who controls communication controls more than the means to transmit messages. “That person”, says Rosalynde, “has in his/her hands a terrible power, the power to create for his wide audience an image of the world, and more importantly, an image of itself” (7). Literature in the modern era is generally identified with the printed page and the visual practice of reading in silence. So strong is this conception that people tend to forget about the old tradition of literature as an essentially oral activity, spoken, chanted or listened to. Even Africa’s vibrant oral tradition is ebbing out as written tradition takes centre stage. Ruth Finegan (1978, 1) captures the place of oral literature in Africa as follows:

Africa possesses both written and unwritten traditions. The former are relatively well known, at any rate the recent writings in European languages (much work remains to be publicised on earlier Arabic and local written literatures in Africa). The unwritten forms, however, are far less widely known and appreciated. Such forms do not fit neatly into the familiar categories of literate cultures, they are harder to record and present, and, for a superficial observer at least, they are easier to overlook than the corresponding reading material.

This notwithstanding, Africans still rely on oral tradition, especially those in the rural areas of the continent. The relevance of the media to literature, especially in a setting where the reading culture is gradually and imperceptibly ebbing out, cannot be overemphasised. Reading and writing are more demanding than talking and listening. The printed text is therefore not enough if literature must be functional. The media offers the opportunity for the gap created by the limitations of the printed text to be filled. Drawing from this, Coward (1990, 9) asserts that “..The mass media

have been used to give an additional boost to ideas about literature as the true place where cultural values can be found.” A work is not complete until it reaches an audience. The manner in which it reaches the audience becomes of interest. And the mass media provides a much-needed channel for a work to reach its audience as it gives room for a possibility of providing the audience with the ready-made goods for consumption.

In addition to this, and of more relevance to utilitarian literature, is the multitude that the media provides for literary works. Oboler (1976, xv) argues that the writer who benefits from the full opportunity offered by the media “can have in a single half hour a larger audience than Shakespeare had in a life time.” Oboler is marvelled by the enlarged audience for literature that the media renders available, what the printed word alone would not achieve in whatever circumstances. John Reith (Andrew Hurr, (ed), 132) echoes the same opinion when he posits that:

There is no instance in the history of civilisation of a new cultural medium coming so rapidly into general use as broadcasting... the microphone can achieve what the printed word and the philosophical formulation of doctrine have failed to bring about.

Many renowned contemporary British playwrights like Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, Robert Bolt and Tom Stoppard began their writing careers in radio. They all recognise the importance of radio as a means of reaching an audience, but join critics and scholars in ignoring radio drama as a credible sub-genre. Stoppard (*The Plays for Radio*, 199) opines that because of the enormous audience the radio provides, and because of its liberating nature, “the first duty of the artist should be to capture the radio station.” This statement translates to the invaluable place of the media in literary creativity and consumption. Nobel Price laureate, Wole Soyinka (*Writing for the Radio*, 66), who began his career with the BBC African Theatre

feature in the nineteen fifties, points out the enormous advantages that African radio drama has over other art forms:

African radio drama is a bonus for writers and listeners...they are listening in Zimbabwe at the same time as in Sudan, in South Africa, in Nigeria, in Sierra Leone. And this is definitely a crushing of boundaries in a way that the written word on its own may not have.

If Reith, Oboler and Soyinka concentrate on the size of the audience that the mass media necessitate, Bernth Lindfors finds much more than just that. He forcefully argues that the mass media actually promote the production of literary works on the African continent. Using Nigeria as his example, Lindfors in *Early Nigerian Literature*, 76 states that:

The history of Anglo-Nigerian letters does not begin with Amos Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard*. The history of Anglo-Nigerian letters, in other words, does not begin with Tutuola's far-from-immaculate conception in 1952. Rather it begins with the popular mass media which were available to educated Nigerians more than half a century earlier. It is doubtful whether Nigerian literature in English would have developed as rapidly as it did, had it not been for the experience and encouragement young authors received by writing for their own people in their own popular media.

Lindfors' argument is elaborate and profound and is corroborated by Emmanuel Obiechina in *Onitsha Market Literature* (1972), which traces the origin of Nigerian popular literature to the late nineteenth century. Obiechina argues that Onitsha market literature was the breeding ground of Nigerian literature.

Like Onitsha Market Literature, the Guinness Cameroon Corpus inadvertently served as a source of inspiration to Cameroon

Anglophone writers. This is evident in the selection of radio plays by current front-line Anglophone Cameroon playwrights like Bole Butake and Victor Epie Ngome. While the Onitsha writers opted for an all-inclusive pamphleteering project, the Cameroon Anglophone writers seized an opportunity offered by Guinness Company to reach an even wider audience with stories that reflected the lives of the ordinary people whom Development Theatre seeks to elevate from objects to subjects.

Radio renders literature much more functional than it would otherwise do without it. Radio drama is the veritable literature of combat to empower the powerless in the community and put them in the fold of the struggle for progress and development. The celebrated 'literature of combat' that Ngugi (1972) and Achebe (1988) employ for the liberation of the continent can be seen as being over-rated. It has not effected the desired goals owing to the fact that it is very elitist and therefore exclusively for the literate in a continent where Frommlet (1992) reminds us that more than sixty five percent of the population is illiterate. It is here that the media becomes invaluable if the writers' mission has to be accomplished. The television, radio or print media would enhance the availability and interpretation of literature. Radio drama is popular culture par excellence in the African context by virtue of its all-embracing and down-to-earth characteristics. The 'popular' in popular culture requires some clarification within the context of this chapter.

According to Bourdieu (1997, 112) the notion of the 'popular' has an ambiguous undertone carrying with it the history of socio-political and cultural struggles. It is a sight of contested evaluation, and for a long time it was employed pejoratively whereby to be popular was to be mean, and therefore not admirable; it was to be the downtrodden or what in Fanonian terms is referred to as 'the wretched of the Earth'. This perception of the notion of popular is reflected in Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1972), where Pistol asks the disguised Henry V: "Discuss unto me; art thou officer? Or art thou base, common and popular? (Act IV: Scene I). Later 'popular' began losing its pejorative quality through its association with popular will

and the masses. What was produced or consumed by the people, meaning the masses, became of more value than what was produced or consumed by the elite, which was not seen or known by the people and therefore not relevant to the majority. Popular sovereignty or popular opinion became highly pregnant phrases for good and admirable qualities. The 'Popular' in most contemporary analyses on popular culture suggests people-focused or people-oriented phenomena.

In another thought pattern, the word 'popular' offers an existing social category, the people. 'The people' refers to a class or a group of classes usually without very clear distinctions. Hall (1997, 26) opines that culture can be seen as lurking between these porous distinctions. In Western civilisation the people's culture is perceived as lowbrow and therefore, opposed to highbrow culture meant for the nobles in courts. What is clear therefore is that the word 'popular', which does not offer a clear-cut definition in the western historical reality, poses some difficulties in application in the African context where highbrow is not associated with an ancient ruling oligarchy or an identifiable ruling class. It is not the privilege of a longstanding ruling class but that of confused and antagonised new elite that emerges out of the ashes of imperialist subjugation. This is the new elite that Frantz Fanon (1968, 149) describes as "an underdeveloped middle class"¹⁶, given its dependence on the western powers.

The African elite is seen in terms of its degree of association with western values and taste, but at the same time it is bound up with the masses by numerous ties of kinship. The elite's 'other' on the other hand, the people, also does not carry such a blurred distinction in the

¹⁶ Fanon (1961, 37) opines that the national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped middle class which has practically no economic power, and in any case, not in any way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hopes to replace. In its narcissism, Fanon continues, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country. But that same independence which literally drives it into a corner will give rise within its ranks to catastrophic reactions, and will oblige it to send out.

African context as it falls neither under the peaceful and problem-free folk nor the metropolitan proletariat as viewed through western prism. In Africa different types of associations and identities have brought forth-corresponding new publics. New types of popular productions have brought together multitudes that neutralise the already fluid binary paradigms of highbrow and lowbrow. This conception does not overlook the reality of the gap between the rich and the poor but takes into consideration the fact that 'the people' often have links that meander into the elite corps and make them see themselves as potential members of the corps.

Therefore, the categories represented in the rhetoric of 'popular', call it 'the wretched of the earth', 'the people', 'the masses' or 'the grassroots' in the African context, remain largely fluid. What often asserts itself then, is a strong sense of 'otherness' or 'us' and 'them' though even here the distinction between these tends to be highly porous thereby rendering what passes for popular culture out of water-tight definition. This, in part, explains why writings on popular culture have varied expressions for the same notion and sometimes with different definitions for the same term. Examples abound.

Storey (2002, 2) broadly defines culture as "a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development." He goes further to define "Popular culture" as an empty conceptual category, one which can be filled in a wide variety of often conflicting ways depending on the context of use. According to him, one would talk of the cultural development of a people and be referring only to aesthetic and intellectual factors. Storey's second definition of "culture" is that which implies a particular way of life whether of a people, a period or a group. He states that the "popular" in popular culture carries a quantitative dimension though a quantitative index is not enough to provide an adequate definition of popular culture.

Rosenberg (1971, 18) describes the string of differences in the definition of popular culture as a sustained raging debate in which "protagonists lambaste antagonists in an arena littered with faulty logic, shop-worn analogies, dubious data and, over all, the

unappetising remains of a stale argument.”¹⁷ Unlike Rosenberg who attempts an umbrella description of the teaming ideological stands on this concept, Dodson (1974, 19) attempts nomenclature of the phenomenon by stating that

Other terms that have been interchanged are the ‘brutal culture’ of Edward shills, the ‘masscult’ of Dwight Macdonald, the ‘lowbrow’ culture of Van Wyck Brooks, and the ‘Kitsch’ of Clement Greenberg....

This notwithstanding, the concept of “popular culture” today almost always suggests the idea of “masses.” Popular or mass culture smacks of a common undertone which borders on the nature of arts and the audience. Critics have identified factors that are implied in the definition of “mass” or “popular” culture.

According to Nye (1970, i), the audience should be large and “generally dispersed and approved.”¹⁸ The latter is not alone in looking at the concept from the perspective of the audience, which is largely informed by the etymology of the word “popular.” Hammel (1972) is perhaps more convincing when he asserts that popular literature is that which “appeals to the masses and that does not require a high level of intellectual or cultural refinement...is more ‘democratic’ since it is accessible to larger numbers of people and that ‘high art’ tends to be ‘aristocratic’, the province of the more civilised.”¹⁹

Unlike Storey, Nye and Hammel, other scholars in the discipline define popular culture in terms of the role it plays. Among those in this school is Haag (1961, 53) who notes that the role of popular culture in people’s lives “is a major determinant.” Still, to others the literariness of art determines whether it is popular or not. To Kaplan

¹⁷ See Bernard Rosenberg in “Mass Culture Revisited” in Bernard Rosenberg (ed) *Mass Culture*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1971 3

¹⁸ Nye Russel. *The Unembarrassed Muse*. New York: The Dial Press, 1970, i

¹⁹ Hammel William (ed) *The Popular Arts in America: a Reader*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1972, 1

(1966, 86) it is not very much a question of the size of the audience and the manner of dissemination but the “kind of taste that popular arts satisfy, and not how wide-spread that taste is, is what distinguishes them.” There are those who posit that popular arts could be defined from the standpoint of the manner of production. Dwight Macdonald (1962, 59) militantly argues that popular art is similar to an “article for mass consumption like chewing gum” which is “manufactured wholesale for the market.” To him therefore, popular culture is the way it is produced. In some quarters it is the rapport between the work and the audience that defines culture as popular. In this respect the emphasis is on communication.

Ernest Gellner’s influential *Nations and Nationalisms* (2007) identifies culture as the key element on which the foundation of the nation is built. He argues that the initiation of cultural norms shared by the masses should be left in the hands of the national elite. To him “high culture”, as opposed to low culture that comes from these elite is what enhances the construction of a national culture. Benedict Anderson’s groundbreaking book on national construct, *Imagined community* (2006), presents a convincing notion of a nation as an imagined entity. However, Gellner’s glorification of elite culture and Anderson’s emphasis on literacy and print media as the basic factors for building a national culture overshadow popular culture which has the capacity to create that imagined frontiers more than elite culture would. Barker (1999, 84) convincingly states that “imagining ‘us’ as ‘one’ is part of the process of nation-building and there is no medium which has been able to speak to as many people in pursuit of that goal as the mass media.”

The relegation of popular culture to the background has proven to be less productive over the years even in more advanced countries of the world. Edensor (2002, 15) writes:

National elite, governments and patricians continue to perpetuate the idea that “high” culture is something that the nation must be associated with, as form of international prestige. The national badges of high culture...remain marks

of status. Governments are often happy to lavish funds on such cultural flagships...the international success of popular writers, film makers, television stars and sporting heroes has ensured their place in the pantheon of nationally important achievers. As I write, the British tabloid press has been celebrating the success of Anne Robinson...Other examples include the pride at the international acclaim bestowed on Indian novelist Arunhati Roy and the fame brought to Croatia by their football team and tennis champion Goran Ivanisevic

The question would be how to fit African plays for radio in English within this definitional taxonomy of popular culture as seen above. Radio drama by its very nature is popular, especially if we adhere to the definitions given by Storey, Nye and Hammel. It also fits Macdonald's definition because of its ready-made format, where the writer/producer simply takes the product to the multitudinous audience. In a broader definition of culture, Mcdonald had defined the term as a collection of symbols produced by a social system through which a people can perceive their environment. A people's literature is by and large their cultural artefact, and when it reaches them by the way expounded by Storey, Nye, Hammel and Mcdonald, we can talk of popular culture.

The majority of people in the continent to whom we are paying attention and who constitute the natural target audience of Popular Theatre are tottering under the weight of misery. It is in a bid to clarify this paradox associated with the beneficiaries of Development Theatre that we have several appellations with an assertive 'popular' undertone; 'popular' because the bearing is still towards the majority of the people of the society who possess different degrees of inadequate means of livelihood; people whom Development Theatre seeks to empower and would do so much more meaningfully via African Radio Theatre.

The Context African Radio Theatre

As in the colonial era, one of the factors that encouraged the development of radio theatre in Africa during the post-colonial period is the use of the media for political propaganda. The radio (like television and print media) is not seen as serving the interest of the masses. It is seen as being manipulated by the ruling class. In David Kerr's *African Popular Theatre* (1995, 172), he describes it as "a blatant form of cultural imperialism that arises from the already existing dependence of the African peripheries on metropolitan economic infrastructures"²⁰. Ambroise Kom ("Africa's Absence" in *Research in African Literature* 1998, 76), in a similar tone, regrets this state of affairs in a continent which he describes as having a literature without a voice:

In the absence of professional channels, African criticism could have found expression through local media: National newspapers and magazines, radio, television, etc. But how can we forget that in Africa the only media that can be certain of their durability are controlled by the state. As for the public service media they are for the most part the servants of the standing regimes with the notion of the public service considered a myth. The state journalists do not hesitate to treat literature as they would any other social or political events. What is important is what the regime they serve can get from them.

Ironically, Western media houses have over the years shown a keen interest in promoting African popular media culture. Radio Deutsche Welle runs a training centre known as "Ausbildungszentrum" with focus on radio plays from Africa. In the

²⁰ For more on this see Kerr David. *African popular Theatre: From Precolonial Times to the present Day*. London: Heinemann, 1995, 172

same vein the BBC has been running a weekly series called “African theatre” since the nineteen sixties. The plays produced are eventually sold or donated to African radio corporations through which they get to local audiences. Moreover, the BBC has established FM transmission services in different parts of Africa in which these plays are aired on a more regular basis. Besides this, there have been some efforts geared at implanting an African media culture by practitioners in the continent. The Cameroon Radio Television Corporation (CRTV-Radio), the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), the Voice of Kenya (VOK), are some radio stations that are on record for engaging in local productions in the area of radio drama. With such reliance on foreign bodies comes suspicion of foreign influence on the production or re-broadcast of plays for local audiences. High-Tech, which is also a borrowed value from the West, is spearheaded by the African middle class and therefore, foreign dominated. We risk having the same vicious circle - a self-proclaimed avant-garde talking on behalf of the masses; a tendency that does not help much in restoring the sense of belonging to the common man in the prevailing social order.

The aforementioned draw-backs notwithstanding, Radio has remained a dominant medium in Africa due partly to its cost effectiveness and the communal habit of the extended family, which gives room for group listening. A comparative study of Kenyan media came out with the findings that the per capita cost of a single radio programme was 0.008 US dollars and that of television programme were 0.40 dollars. In the same vein according to a 1961 UNESCO survey in Nigeria (*African Popular Theatre*, 26), there were two million radio receivers and only 60 000 TV receivers (Kerr, 1998). The little that has been registered as part of the solution to the several problems plaguing Africa, which owe their roots to the absence of cultural creativity, has been largely due to radio broadcasting.

In spite of the colonial and neo-colonial domination of this medium, it has gone a long way to promote and distribute written literature in Nigeria and in the Zambian/Malawian examples. The

persistent threats on the programme contents notwithstanding David Kerr (1998, 136) explains:

The situation of radio is much more complex. The staffing of radio Zambia and Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) has been almost totally localised. The programme content too, apart from an occasional play or documentary and for the quite large amount of western (mostly pop) music, has been localised. There is some threat to the local content, however, by the emphasis on commercialisation and cost-effectiveness introduced under the IMF Structural Adjustment Programme, especially after the introduction of religious and commercial private stations. There is a real threat that overt cultural imperialism could make a comeback through evangelical or commercial channels.

This situation is similar to what obtains in the Cameroonian setting. With the exception of musical programmes in the national Radio Service of the state-owned Cameroon Radio Television Corporation (CRTV), there are ten weekly cultural programmes. According to *CRTV Programme Guide*: (2000), the cultural programmes on air during the period ranging from January to December 2000 were: “The brunch time drama”, “Cultural Corner”, “Radio Drama” “Theatre Radiophonique”, “Cultural Outlook”, “Poetry Time”, “Radioscopie d’un Artiste”, “Chronique d’Afrique”, “Questions Culturelle”, and “Culturama.”

This bearing towards cultural creativity and re-animation through the radio medium in a continent where the spoken word has an age-old tradition brings along with it newer and even more innovating cultural phenomena for the people. Given its advantage of reaching millions of listeners at relatively low cost, radio has played a relevant role in bridging the gap between African writers and the masses. Peter Kinyanjui (1990, 15) comments on the relevance of radio in a continent where the spoken word has an age-old tradition thus:

Radio also carries a special privilege in Africa because of the oral tradition which is still strong in most countries, the spoken word carries considerable weight and radio has been found to be easily comparable with traditional communication media of theatre, music, dance and story telling

In *Dance, Media Entertainment and Popular Theatre in South-East Africa* (1998), David Kerr articulates the same apprehension in a survey of the development of radio drama in Zambia and Malawi. For him, early African broadcasters were not conscious nationalist revolutionaries, but their shows went a long way to provide catharsis for deracinated African listeners by building a bridge between the tribal and the modern world. In this way radio gave meaning and clues to many problems faced by the people at the grassroots. We can infer that colonial radio provided more than just the cathartic solution to the problems of acculturation. In the process, both urban and rural Africans acquired the habit of listening to the radio which they used not only as a tool for information but also as a tool for appreciating the dramatic changes brought about by the new world reality.

The Beginnings of African Radio Theatre

The BBC began experimenting with short wave transmitters that targeted the British dominions in Africa as far back as 1927 with programmes that were referred to as 'Empire Services'. The corporation would not improve the quality of these short wave transmitters due to lack of funds that had not been envisaged by the head office in London. In his detailed treatise, *Political Legitimation in Zimbabwean Broadcasting*, James Zaffro (1984, 6), states that the first radio transmitter in Central Africa was established in 1932 by imperial powers and was aimed at serving the dominion in Africa.

Originally designed for weather reports, the transmitter was to be employed for experimental news and entertainment broadcast aimed primarily at the settler community. A few years later BBC set up broadcasting services in most of her colonies in Africa, though most of the broadcast contents came from the mother station in London. The idea was to keep the colonial expatriates in touch with home and keep alive the feeling of belonging to a common imperial enterprise that must be protected. The indigenous community was not considered as part of the audience at this early stage. Radio was meant for the masters, and in most cases the natives were discouraged from following broadcast contents. As Fanon (1961, 126) puts it, "On the farms, the radio reminds the settler of the reality of colonial power, and by its very existence dispenses safety, security." In spite of the move to bar Africans from listening to radio that was meant for the settlers, there was an imperceptible growth in the number of natives who owned radio receivers by the 1950s, a phenomenon that coincided with the expansion of radio facilities in most of Anglophone Africa. The BBC broadcast drama and feature programmes that showcased British cultural values, a broadcast policy that exposed the Africans in their dominion to some "obscenities." In a bid to avoid this, the colonial administration established one more broadcasting service with the aim of catering for the increasing African audience. With this the one hurdle to achieving a popular African broadcast service was the inability to own receivers. This problem however, became less acute with the popularising of the community-listening system. In community-listening an entire family would surround one radio receiver and follow a given programme being broadcast. African broadcasters began registering fame amongst their audiences.

Despite this steady development of the cultural media on the continent, African radio playwrights would make their significant debuts at the BBC with its weekly programme, "African Theatre" produced in the nineteen sixties and nineteen seventies by Gwynneth Henderson. BBC became the focus for radio drama in Anglophone Africa. Its productions were and are still donated and/or sold to

radio corporations on the continent. For example, the national Radio service of the Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation (CRTV) broadcasts a bi-monthly called “Radio Theatre” of which, according to the deputy director of cultural affairs, Kenneth Asobo, thirty per cent is donated by the BBC. Before the re-introduction of “Radio Drama” on CRTV National Station in the early nineteen nineties, there had been sporadic broadcasts of radio plays which did not feature officially on the programme guide of the corporation. It took the deputy director of cultural programmes on CRTV some endurance to convince the management of the corporation to put “Radio Drama” on its programme guide almost a decade after.

Like Radio Deutsche Welle and L’organisation Radio Diffusion-Television Francaise (ORTF), the BBC also embarked on the training of radio playwrights and the organisation of contests which saw an impressive output from budding and established playwrights on the continent. For instance in 1970 the BBC launched an all-Africa playwriting contest with established African authors (Wole Soyinka among) as judges. The BBC has continued to promote African radio playwrights till date with the organisation of contests which bring to the limelight major writers. The 1998 contest brought to the limelight Cameroonian journalist and playwright, Victor Epie Ngome, through his price-winning radio piece entitled *The First Defence* (1990). The play has been discussed in chapter five.

All the aforementioned activities by the BBC African Theatre Service provided and continue to provide fertile ground for African (radio) playwrights and producers. During training programmes they get acquainted with the BBC-style radio drama techniques such as the role of sound, silence, dialogue, etc. One of the first successful stories of the BBC African Theatre was Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Anowa*, broadcast in 1968. The play is about a woman who turns down a young man considered a good choice by her parents, only to elope with an undesirable. The play raises the heavily loaded question of the influence of parents in children’s marital lives and its impact on the African society. Wole Soyinka’s earlier *Broke Time Bar* (1960), a comedy series broadcast on the BBC in the early nineteen sixties, was

based on the popular West African trickster formula. The protagonist who is an owner of a bar is assisted by his wife to fleece his customers. Soyinka's transformation of the indigenous trickster motif for a mass media formula is intriguing.

In 1948, the British colonial authorities opened a Broadcasting House in Lusaka, Zambia, called Central African Broadcasting Service (CABS). This was a move to dissuade Africans from listening to British programmes. The move was to later yield another uncomfortable result to the colonial authorities. For, less than two decades after the creation of CABS the organ established itself as a credible station with very popular programmes (Kerr, 1998). Some newly appointed British ardent and liberal-minded broadcasters (Michael Kittermaster and Peter Fraenkel, for example) were adept at developing African radio theatre. They drilled South Eastern African playwrights, producers and technicians on the techniques of radio theatre. This saw the emergence of a lively radio drama culture with broadcasters like Andrey Masiye and Edward Kateka becoming household names in South East Africa in particular (Masiye, 1977). The lone hurdle with the expansion and popularity of radio theatre rested on the inability of most Africans to own receivers, a problem that found an only available solution at that time in the awareness and practice of community listening as already indicated above. CABS programmes were largely drawn from local situations. Broadcasters were regularly sent to the field to collect music, songs, folktales and narratives that were put on the menu of CABS' programmes. By borrowing extensively from local flavour to entertain, inform and educate the people, CABS was in consonance with the formulae embedded in the concept of development Theatre.

CABS ran into an uncomfortable relationship with the colonial administration when it became evident that its programme guide had several critical slurs, most of which were satirical of the settlers' policy. This was more acute for the colonial administration, given the wind of the struggle for freedom from colonial rule that was blowing across the continent. Ghana had achieved her independence in 1957 and other countries were fighting to achieve theirs. Masiye (1977, 30)

gives an example of the Nyanja, (a local East African satirical song) which was very critical of the colonial administration and the colonial administration never loved it:

When will the day of salvation come
For all the poor people of Africa?
Africa, there are plenty of problems,
But we shall overcome them.

When the colonial government slammed a ban on this song, and others with satirical undertones, Masiye combed the nooks and crannies of the periphery for more songs with more revolutionary undertones but which were embroidered with the camouflage of heavy literary devices. Moreover, the broadcast of African language plays were more frequent. It was possible to do this and get away with it, given that such plays were based on improvised creativity and therefore had communal authorship and not individual authors who could be easily identified and dealt with accordingly. Edwin Mlongoti was particularly influential in the broadcast of radio plays in African languages, occasionally adapting oral narratives to radio and giving them a dramatic touch (Kerr, 1998).

At a certain point Masiye established himself as a prominent figure in the area of cultural radio dedicated to the building of African theatre. His play script *The Lands of Kazembe* (1958) became so popular that it caught the attention of an English open-minded producer, Michael Etherton, who narrowed its horizon by adapting it for the stage. The play was replete with nationalist sentiment. Kerr (1998, 121) notes that “the whole notion of an African writing a play in English about colonialism seemed threatening to some colonialists, particularly the idea of black and white actors performing together on the radio.” It was to be seen as a threat to the Queens dominion in Africa at a time the first and second world wars had taught Africans the ideas of liberty and nationhood.

This is the thorny and yet progressive route taken by African radio drama to get to where it is today. From the aforementioned,

one can find the huge corpus of culture that existed and was in search of a market place. Masiye, Mlongoti, Kateka and many other indigenes could build a huge culture industry in East Africa if the colonial administration were to give them a free hand. The hurdles notwithstanding, African Theatre had made its debut and its impact, even if imperceptibly, has been far-reaching.

The Guinness Cameroon/Radio Buea Corpus

The absence in the late 1970s of Cameroon Anglophone literature on the blue print of chapters on *The History of African Literatures in European Languages* (1980) caught the attention of the Canadian scholar, Stephen Arnold, who in a letter to the general editor of the publication, Albert Gerard, drew his attention to the lacuna. Arnold reminded Gerard of the fact that there can be no people without a literature, which is a ‘genetic fact of human beingness’. Professor Gerard replied that he was reserving pages for Arnold to fill in the volume. This is what inspired Arnold and Abioseh Porter to go down to the field and explore the literary scene of Anglophone Cameroon, a setting they would later describe as the ‘Orphan of the Commonwealth’. Other scholars like Cutis Keim and Karen Keim (1982), and Bole Butake and Nalova Lyonga (1982) had raised debates about the absence of Anglophone Cameroon Writing in publications on African literature. Anglophone Cameroon literature had actually been in existence since the 1950s though not in quality and quantity proportionate to other literatures in the continent. It had not drawn considerable attention because of the orphanage imposed on it by the connivance of history and geography.²¹ After his experience in the field, Arnold (1978, 36) wrote:

In “Historicity and Cameroonian Fiction: Writing the Nation” in *Globalisation and the New World Order: Challenges and Opportunities for Africa and the African Diaspora* (2004), Victor Gomia explores the historico-geographical factors that gave Cameroon Anglophone Literature an oblique attention by scholarship, especially

We found dozens of people who regarded themselves as writers, some of them doing excellent work. Most had no knowledge of more than one or two others. Many of them mentioned that they had taken part in a Guinness contest. Others, and amongst them some of Cameroon's best writers in English, said explicitly that they had not entered the contest for a variety of reasons, ranging from personal to artistic and political.

Arnold found a window into the Anglophone Cameroon budding literary terrain in the Guinness Cameroon literary contest. The background of the contest is germane within the context of this book.

In line with the policy of developing cultural media in the late 1970s, as most media houses in Africa in the aftermath of independence, the management of Radio Buea, the major station in Cameroon's two English-speaking provinces, had resorted to laying in stock feature programmes for the station. The then management of the station could not afford the required resources. Paul Kode, station manager for the Buea radio station, contacted Guinness Cameroon and requested them to sponsor a talent contest for budding playwrights. Already involved with sponsoring other contests that celebrated local cultural values, like the 'Mount Cameroon race' as a marketing strategy in the face of an imminent competition with another brewery, Brasseries Du Cameroun, the

during the first three decades after independence. He posits that the lacuna is a reflection of the orphanage imposed on the people by the United Nations who saw the polity as incapable of emerging as an independent nation after colonialism. Southern Cameroon had been administered by the British as an appendage to Nigeria while East Cameroon was considered France's main colonial territory. Consequent on this was that while the French offered scholarship opportunities to French-speaking Cameroonians to study in France, the English gave similar opportunities for Nigerians to study in Britain. This resulted to the big names in literary scholarship in both territories in the likes of Mongo Beti and Ferdinand Oyono from East Cameroon and Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe in Nigeria. Southern Cameroonians for the most part had in their own commonwealth grants the movement for post secondary education to Nigeria. This, Gomia states, accounts largely for the slow down in the literature industry of Anglophone Cameroon.

management of Guinness Cameroon took the commitment not only to sponsor the contest by making the prizes available, but also by making provision for logistics. A four-man panel of judges made up of a Guinness Cameroon employee, the examination officer in the South West provincial delegation of National Education, the South West Provincial Delegate of Culture and the station manager of radio Buea met and laid down rules for a quarterly competition in the areas of drama, poetry and short story.

It became evident to Arnold and Porter that the Guinness Cameroon contest was a very relevant phase in the history and development of Anglophone Cameroon writing. The scholars went to the headquarters of Guinness Cameroon in Douala, an unexpected place of research for literary scholars. A rather embarrassed, bemused and bewildered official of Guinness Cameroon who hardly knew that the company was keeping close to the trash can what literary scholars would consider fertile material for scholarship, reluctantly gave the scholars access to an “18 kilogramme legacy of manuscripts...lying in a corner of a crowded office serving no apparent purpose, and therefore about to be destroyed” (Granqvist Raoul, ed, 40). Out of this eighteen kilogramme-lot emerged the corpus which is presently preserved thousands of kilometres from Cameroon, in the University of Alberta in Canada and the Institute for African studies of the University of Bayreuth in Germany.

It has been Guinness’ policy, since its establishment in Dublin in 1759, to expand into foreign markets with an aggressive marketing strategy that would face the almost always available competitive market. In the late 1960s the brewery was one of the first to open a branch in Douala, Cameroon. As part of a larger profit-making drive in Cameroon and Africa as a whole, the brewery sought to and eventually got the position to be seen as playing a major role in cultural animation. The idea was for the company to be perceived as playing a major role in the area of promoting the people’s cultural values that would prepare a fertile ground for the perception of the brewery’s product as being good and therefore consumable. The

simple slogan advertising the Guinness stout; “Guinness is good for you” serves as a facilitator in this persuasive commercial.

What became a joint project between Radio Buea and Guinness Cameroon resulted in an avalanche of poems, short stories and plays from writers (most of them budding). The selected plays discussed and analysed in chapter six of this book came from the Guinness Cameroon corpus. Most of the plays were not produced; nevertheless, the entire experience remains a tiny but very important phase in the history of a people’s literature that is worth bringing to the limelight. Besides, they are good examples of plays written by and for the people for whom change is necessary. They fall within the realms of popular literature like the carefree pamphlets from Accra, Onitsha and Ibadan, as they are written in the common man’s diction with extensive infusion of local colour. They speak incessantly of the changes obtaining in the new world reality - anxieties and risks associated with the quest for money, women as well as their joys, hopes and fears in a world that hosts them but which is becoming so alien to them. A close study of the radio plays reveals that the assumption made by some early critics of African popular literature that it is naïve, carefree and ephemeral is erroneous. Such a misleading assumption should be replaced by the recognition of the fact that even literature for entertainment usually addresses matters of profound interest and concern to those who produce and consume it. Plenty of such literature exists in this setting but are not known.

The aforementioned anecdote on the experience of Abioseh Porter and Stephen Arnold at Guinness Cameroon in Douala is a microcosm of what obtains in the African setting as a whole. In sending contributions to the Guinness-sponsored contest, some of the testers sent accompanying notes, many of which give an insight into the circumstances that triggered bottled-up inspiration in creativity. Two of such notes that follow are indicative of the zeal and interest that existed in a people but which lacked the favourable atmosphere to blossom:

Amuntum John Nwenfor
Mamfe, Manyu Division
The Chief of Station 11th October, 1975
Radio Buea

Dear Sir,

Following the announcement being made over radio Buea concerning the grand literary contest organised by the Cameroon Guinness company, I wish to apply for entry into it. I am submitting...I should be very grateful if given the opportunity to participate in this grand contest, if only for the benefit of the criticism I might have.

Yours faithfully (sign)-sic

Banfon Zaccheus TAKA
Sub-Divisional Officer,
Akwaya, Manyu Division
19th October 1978

The Officer i/c

GUINNESS CAMEROON LITERARY CONTEST
RADIO CAMEROON, BUEA:

Dear Sir,

I have the honour to compete in the GUINNESS CAMEROON LITERARY CONTEST, currently taking place, and hereby forward my Radio play entitled: THE NEW MUST LIVE WITH THE OLD.

Please acknowledge receipt.

Yours faithfully (signature)

Some of these play-scripts in the collection are in their virgin manuscript forms; some are written in exercise books, and still many are anonymous. Nevertheless, the handling of subjects, though not solemn and tactful, portrays some theatrical technique. Subjects as crucial as the individual's quest for freedom and liberty in a society that tends to destroy his individuality and render him incapable of expressing his thoughts abound. The selected plays tend to present the entire texture of the Cameroonian society: rural traditions and

values are pitched against urban modernity, women emancipation in a male chauvinistic setting, social and economic problems, political parables satirising political oppression and corruption, all are embellished with the resource of oral literature to make an edifyingly peculiar collection of drama for radio.

If Guinness Cameroon set the stage for a window of opportunities for Anglophone Cameroonians of writing persuasion to explore their talents, Hamman Schulz exposed yet another cogent African reality in Zaire. Hamman Schulz, editor-in chief of the Wuppertal Peter Hammer Publishing House, went in search of authors in Zaire. According to Wolfram Frommlet (1991, 12):

Hermann Schulz...was interviewed by a radio reporter to whom he explained his interest in African literature and that he would greatly welcome meeting some of the young Zairian talents. The next morning hundreds of authors, complete with unpublished works, were waiting in an endless queue to see him. Nobody had read, checked, corrected, edited or critically assessed their scripts because even the capital of that vast country does not offer its national talents the necessary publishing facilities. Many in the queue had heard the radio interview in distant villages and small towns where no publisher would ever willingly set foot, and they had started the trip immediately in order to see the foreign publisher before he left. Some had written their scripts on waste paper or in exercise books and none had the chance to exchange views and ideas with others since there is no organisation ...to arrange a writers' conference. Even if there were, the majority would not be able to afford the bus ticket to the capital.²²

If Haman Schulz had made his research venture in Cameroon, the experience would have been the same. While very revealing of the

²² Wolfram Frommlet (ed) *African Radio plays*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1991, 12

role of radio in boosting literary creativity and rendering literature more utilitarian, the two scenarios above underscore two basic realities, namely:

1. That there is an avalanche of literature on the continent that is not brought to the fore and therefore, not known or considered in the market place of culture.

2. That outsiders, who are often neither rural nor poor, are those showing much interest in the re-animation of African culture. Many of them are researchers and field staff on the pay roll of non-governmental organisations at home and abroad.

If radio Buea in Cameroon, through its literary contest, offered an opportunity for scholars to bring to the limelight an aspect of a hitherto unregistered value of a people, Haman Schulz's experience offers yet another avenue for us to see a burgeoning class of writers with a burning desire to tell a story about themselves. In both situations the radio medium has been employed, advertently or inadvertently, to trigger a process of knowing, which is the underlying leit-motif of Development Theatre practice.

Anglophone Cameroon Radio Drama (Survey)

In spite of David Kerr's regret about the trend in media houses in Africa embracing blatant forms of cultural imperialism arising from the already existing dependence of the African peripheries on Western metropolitan economic infrastructure, African Radio Theatre offers a unique platform for the people to utilise theatre for their own good. The result of a survey carried out in the two English-speaking regional capitals in Cameroon, Buea and Bamenda, lends credence to the imperceptible but enormous role played by radio drama in generating insightful perspectives about change and progress via local socio-cultural traits. The survey primarily dug up the degree to which people pay attention to radio drama productions and if such productions have any impact on their lives as individuals and as the community at large.

The three-pronged survey was conducted as follows:

1. A questionnaire with sample population was administered in Buea and Bamenda.
2. Conversations with Cameroon's famous popular playwright, Victor Elame Musinga and two Radio Drama producers of Cameroon Radio Television Corporation (CRTV), Kenneth Khan Asobo and David Chuye Bunyui, and
3. A Focused Group Discussion with the market women of the Bamenda Food Market.

Phase One

The questionnaire targeted one hundred respondents in both areas but effectively had seventy three with 49 successfully administered in Bamenda and 24 in Buea.

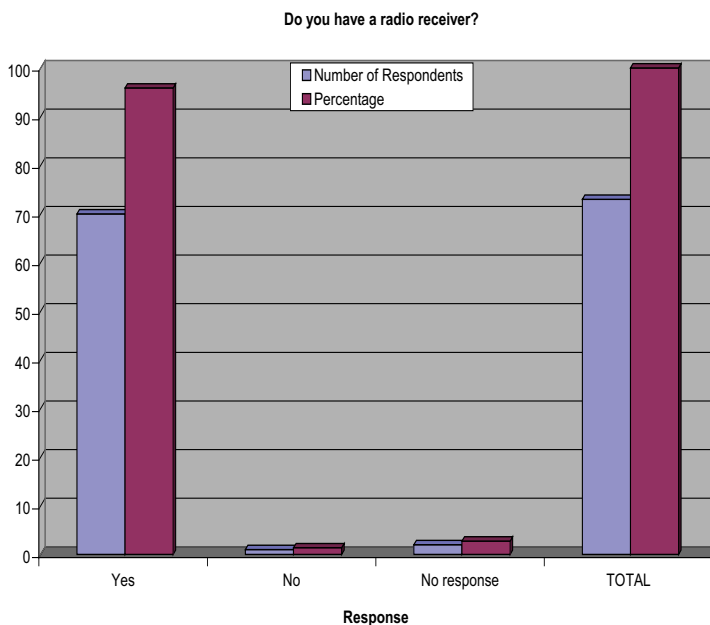
Radio-Drama Questionnaires Administered in Buea and Bamenda

(73 Respondents)

1: Do you have a radio receiver?

Response	Number Respondents	of	Percentage
Yes	70		95.89
No	1		1.36
No	2		2.73
response			
TOTAL	73		100

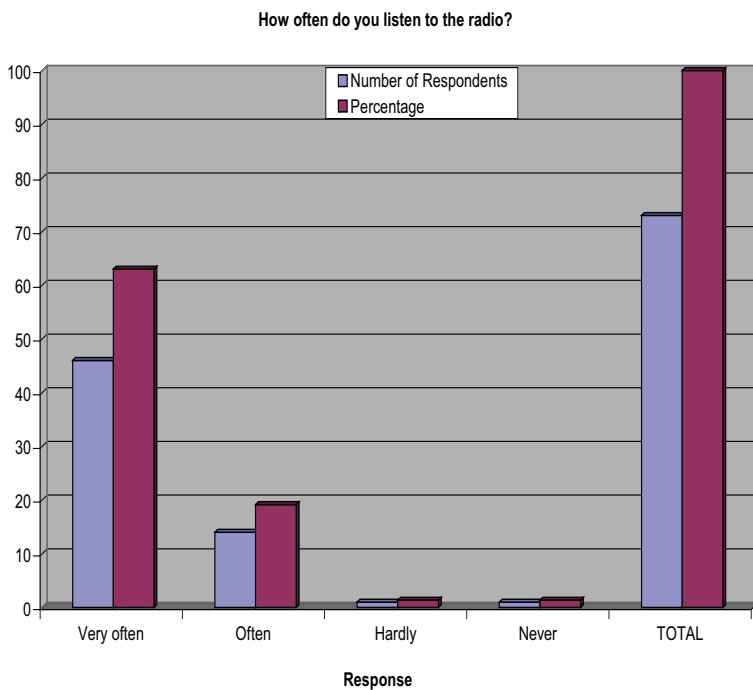
The table above shows that 95.89% of respondents have radio receivers.



How often do you listen to the radio?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very often	46	63.01
Often	14	19.17
Hardly	1	1.36
Never	1	1.36
TOTAL	73	100

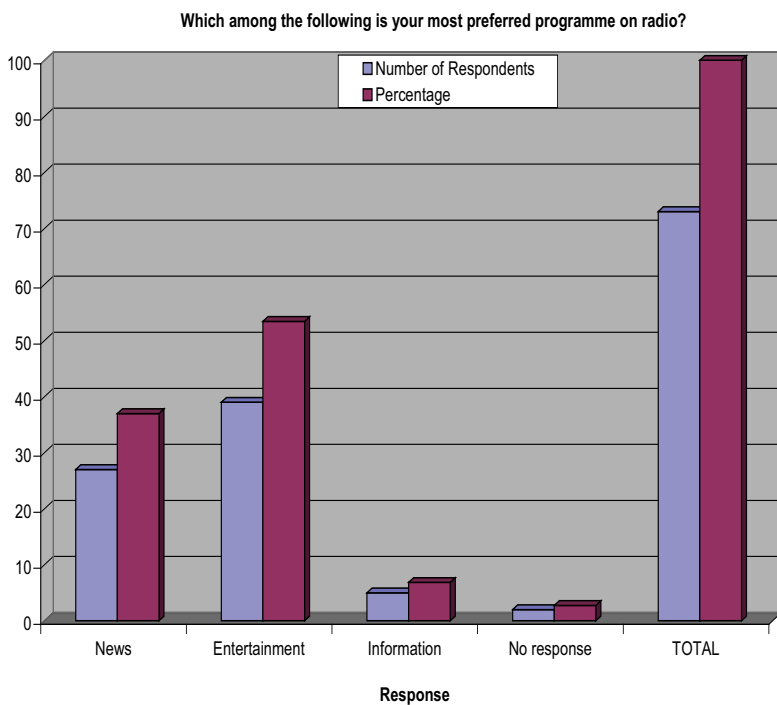
As per the table above only one respondent i.e. 1.36% never listens to the radio. The rest do with 63.01% of respondents saying they listen very often.



Which among the following is your most preferred programme on radio?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
News	27	36,99
Entertainment	39	53,42
Information	5	6,85
No response	2	2,74
TOTAL	73	100,00

The table shows that 53.34% of respondents prefer to listen to entertainment.

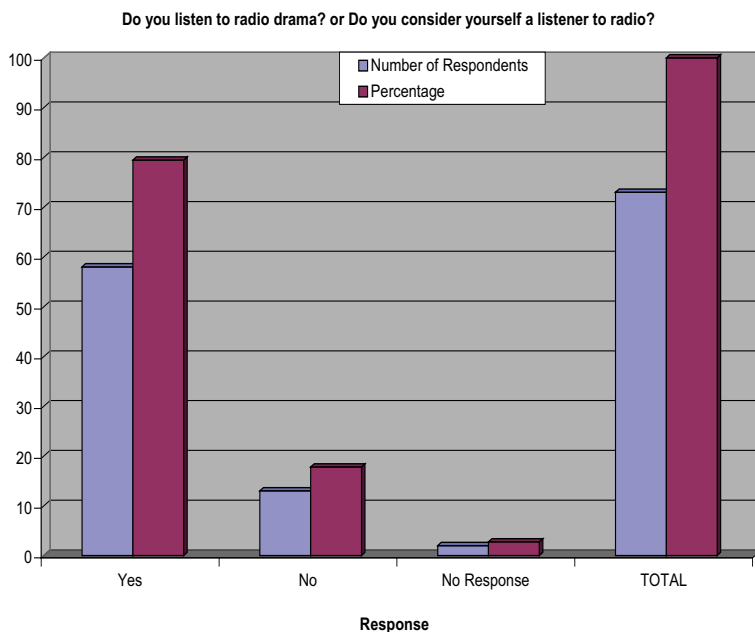


Question 1

Do you listen to radio drama? or Do you consider yourself a listener to radio drama?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	58	79,45
No	13	17,81
No Response	2	2,74
TOTAL	73	100,00

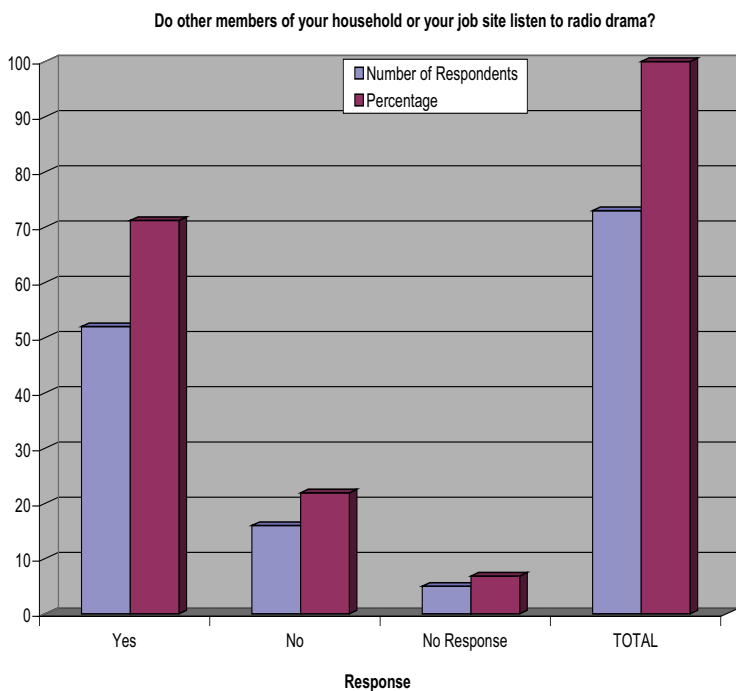
According to this table, 79.45% of respondents listen to radio drama.



Do other members of your household or your work place listen to radio drama?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	52	71.23
No	16	21.91
No Response	05	6.84
TOTAL	73	100

The table shows that family members and co-workers of 71.23% of respondents do listen to radio drama.

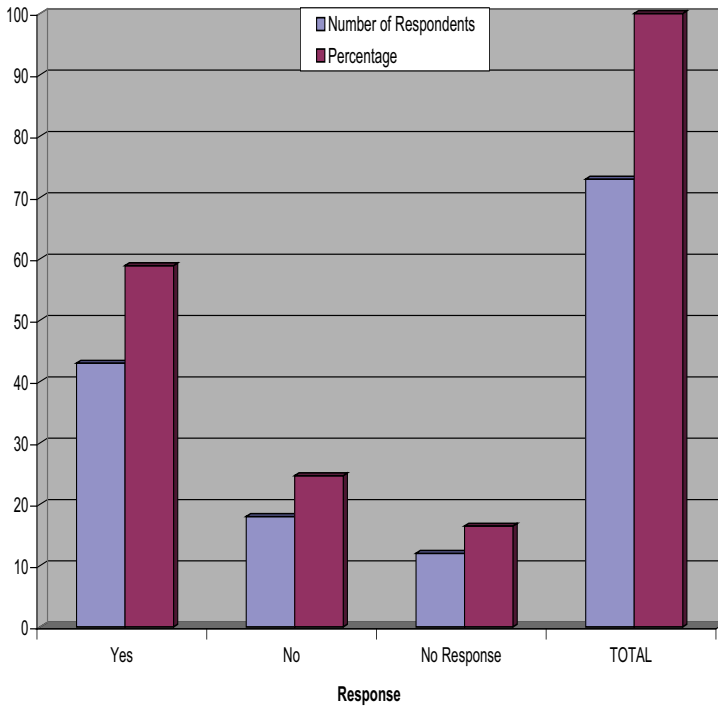


Do you discuss or share your thoughts about issues raised in radio drama with others?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	43	58,90
No	18	24,66
No Response	12	16,44
TOTAL	73	100,00

This table shows that 58.90% of respondents discuss issues raised in radio drama.

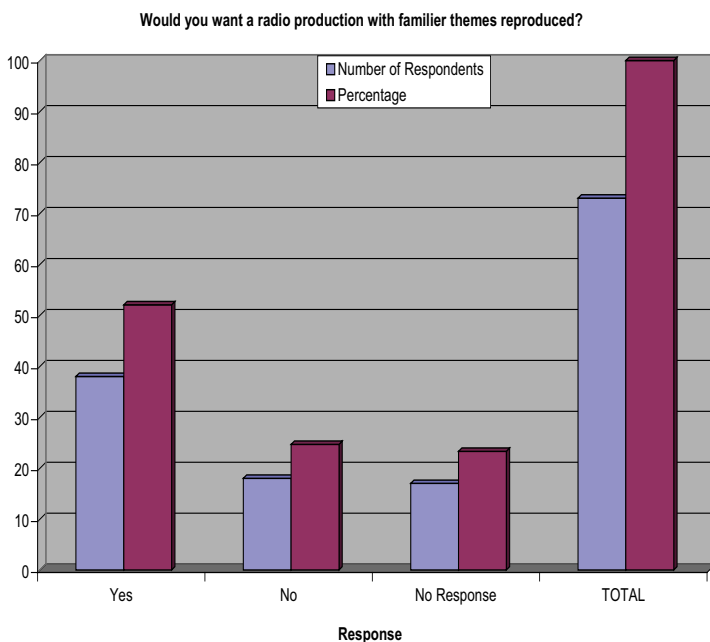
Do you discuss or share your thoughts about issues raised in radio drama with others?



Would you want a radio production with familiar themes reproduced?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	38	52,05
No	18	24,66
No Response	17	23,29
TOTAL	73	100,00

From the table, 52.05% of respondents will want radio productions with familiar themes reproduced.

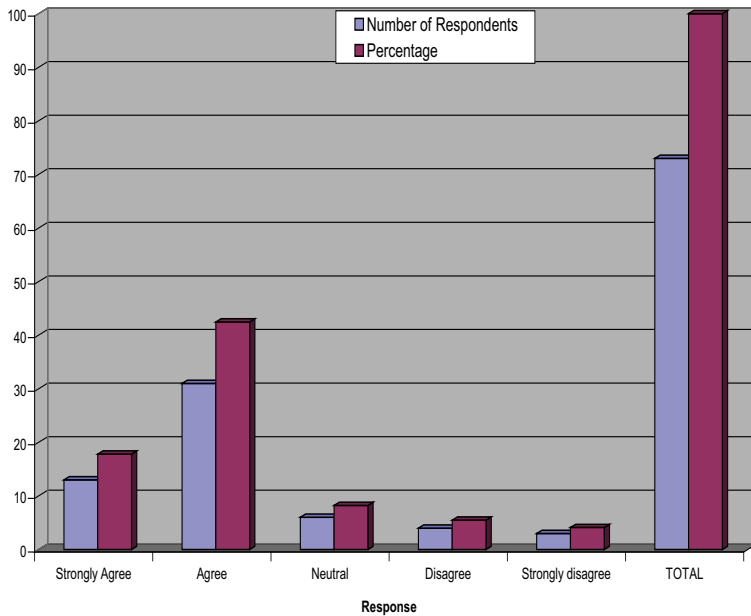


Analysis of the degree of agreement/disagreement with the statement “radio drama is more real than other forms of entertainment”

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	13	17,81
Agree	31	42,47
Neutral	6	8,22
Disagree	4	5,48
Strongly disagree	3	4,11
TOTAL	73	100,00

From the above results, 42.46% of respondents agree and 17.8 strongly agree that radio drama is more real than other forms of entertainment. Thus on the agreement side are 60.16% of respondents.

Analysis of the degree of agreement/disagreement with the statement
"radio drama is more real than other forms of entertainment"

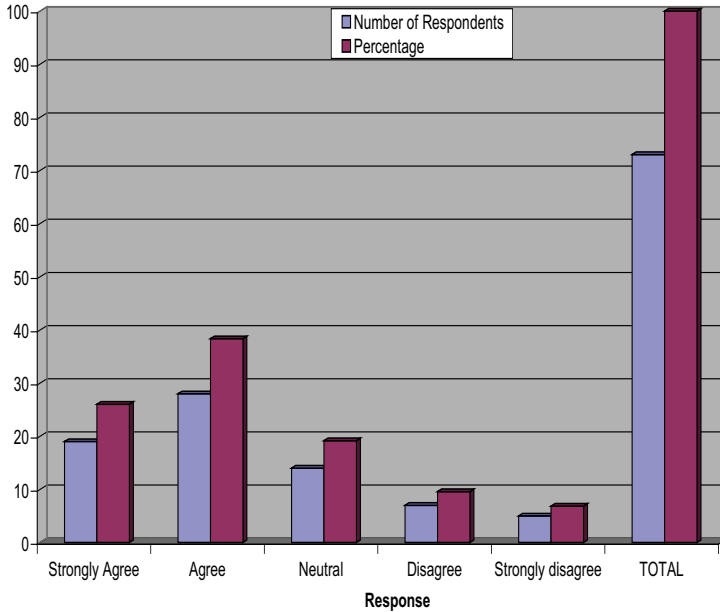


Analysis of the degree of agreement/disagreement with the statement "Radio drama has motivated the coming together of folks for a common initiative"

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	19	26,03
Agree	28	38,36
Neutral	14	19,18
Disagree	7	9,59
Strongly disagree	05	6,85
TOTAL	73	100,00

From the above results, 38.35% of respondents agree and 26.06 strongly agree that radio drama has motivated the coming together of folks for a common initiative. Thus on the agreement side are 64.41% of respondents.

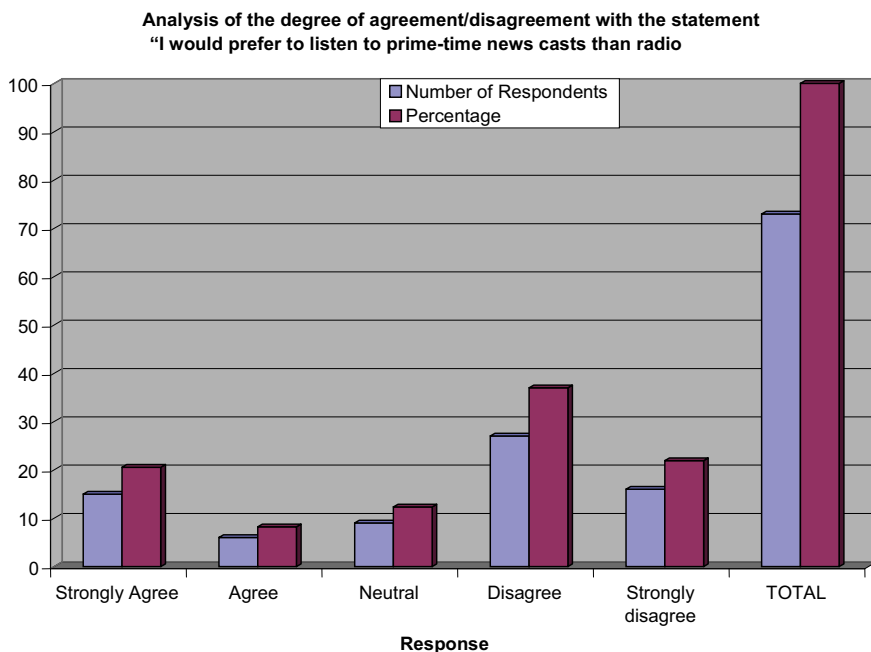
Analysis of the degree of agreement/disagreement with the statement
 "radio drama has motivated the coming together of folks for a common initiative"



Analysis of the degree of agreement/disagreement with the statement "I would prefer to listen to prime-time news casts than radio drama"

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	15	20.54
Agree	06	8.21
Neutral	09	12.32
Disagree	27	36.98
Strongly disagree	16	21.91
TOTAL	73	100

From the above tables, 21.91% of respondents strongly disagree and 36.98 disagree. Thus 58.87% of respondents would rather listen to radio drama than news.



NB: Two of the respondents here footnoted that they were tired of getting the same pattern in news broadcasts, with one substantiating his note on the fact that it is almost always a minister

visiting his home town, inaugurating a structure or chairing a seminar on various topics whose results they never get or that the “head ache of State” is going for a “brief, private” visit to Europe or coming back from such a visit.

The survey succinctly demonstrates that people have a predilection for radio drama in Cameroon hence the perception of radio theatre as a gateway into theatre for the multitude and the subgenre in general as a viable alternative to Development Theatre in Cameroon in particular and Africa in general.

Phase Two

A.) Conversation with radio playwright, Victor Elame Musinga

With only secondary education and no formal training in theatre, Cameroon’s Victor Elame Musinga grew in theatre to be recognised and decorated with his country’s National Order of Merit (CNOM) for promoting culture via popular drama. Interestingly enough, Musinga does not belong to the towering University culture. He is right down there with the people and does easily communicate with them as he employs the English language in a manner that discerns every class of the Anglophone Cameroonian society. With sixty plays to his credit and about half of them produced mostly by CRTV Buea, he has made a land-mark contribution to Anglophone Cameroon radio Theatre. A programmed conversation with him on “Radio Drama in Anglophone Cameroon” impresses that he gives mostly through anecdotes.

For close to an hour Musinga, paints the picture of Cameroon Anglophone theatre in general and Radio Drama in particular, hinting on the latter’s usefulness to the people. Musinga readily admits that he has made a name in the field primarily because his style bridges the gap which his counterparts of the University milieus do not. Most of his plays are written and produced in Pidgin English. According to him, drama is meaningless if the people cannot learn something about themselves from it; and for the people to learn something from

it, it has to be written and/or produced in the language that they can understand. Musinga's taunts on theatre practitioners from the universities were recurrent in his thoughts about making literature functional. He admits receiving assistance from the Theatre Department of the University of Buea but wonders aloud if the proponents of 'literature of combat'²³ there in the Universities know exactly what the people want when they are all cabined in the cocoon of the intellectual glamour that the University setting offers. Musinga thinks that drama is the fastest and most meaningful way of putting across a message, but that "one ought to know how to go about it."

In spite of Musinga's militant assertions about the usefulness of theatre in enhancing socio-cultural mobilisation, he harbours plenty of reservation about the degree to which radio drama in particular can function in this regard in contemporary Cameroon. He intimates that a typical Cameroonian would prefer a good football match and a bottle of beer to a piece of radio drama. Musinga blames the Cameroonian audience for being an essentially consumer people who yield to just anything consumable. He charges that the invasion of the Cameroonian market by Nigerian home-made videos is a big challenge to the Cameroonian culture industry. Musinga avers that there is a lot on Cameroonian art out there 'lying fallow', and that there is a need for some motivation for all of these to be harnessed and put to use.

²³ There has been a tendency among writers and critics of African literature to focus attention on 'the burning issues of the day' while neglecting the invaluable heritage on which such contemporary issues owe their foundation, even if imperceptibly. Fuelled by their discontent with colonial and postcolonial dictatorship, the African writers' outburst has, for the most part, been deafening. The literature is largely inspired by the zeal to change the social order that is essentially anti-people and almost always pro-establishment. Such a determination to command attention to the plight of the people has come with, amongst other resounding rubrics, "Literature of combat" which is in turn corroborated by the (in)famous clichés hinged on: 'not chasing the rat while the house is on fire'. For more than half a century, plenty of such literature has been written and much more has been said and written about it, while the continent remains on edge.

He also apportions blame for the lack of vibrant drama projects in Anglophone Cameroon to, among other factors, suspicion from the successive Francophone led governments in Cameroon. Hear him:

Anglophone Cameroon theatre has also slowed down because government is not interested; it is not hot in encouraging it for fear that if it elevates Anglophone Cameroonian dramatists, they would expose their scandals. It stifles theatre technically by making access to resources difficult if not impossible. Another weakness is that nobody sponsors an artist in Cameroon because they don't see any profit emanating from that activity. But they sponsor football because there is much to reap from it. They also sponsor other activities that interest government so that they can be exempted from certain taxes. Besides, there are no big Anglophone businesses and business men who could sponsor theatre. The National Oil Refinery, SONARA, is a Francophone business. I remember we applied for funding from the National Oil Refinery, SONARA for up to two million francs CFA (four thousand US dollars). SONARA shamelessly gave us only CFA two hundred thousand francs (four hundred US dollars). You see what I mean?

On any particular instance of the usefulness of any of his radio drama productions, Musinga was quick to point to "The Incredible Madam Ida." He said that the protagonist in that piece, Ida, was something of an archetype in the nineteen seventies and eighties in Buea and Limbe in particular as many would refer to any juvenile delinquent as Ida. He also mentions "The Cup" and "Madam Mangrano" as having a tremendous impact on the audience when produced as radio pieces. His most acclaim piece, *The Tragedy of Mr. No Balance* (1972) was once adapted for radio, but it did not pass well due to poor production mechanics. In conclusion, Musinga looks

forward to another series of productions and revitalisation of the theatre industry in his native Buea town and its environs.

B.) Conversation with Kenneth Khan Asobo and David Chuye Buhnui

Kenneth Asobo and David Chuye Bunyui are of the Cultural Programmes desk at the Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation, CRTV, National Radio station. Both have received training at the Radio Deutsche Welle training centre, Cologne in Germany on radio drama production. They have produced radio drama on CRTV over the years. Kenneth Asobo is currently producing a thirty-minute by-weekly slot on the CRTV national station called "Radio Theatre."

The two producers were very excited talking about the production of radio drama in general when we sat down in an open-ended discussion on the subject. According to them there is a lot that can benefit the people if more work could be done on radio drama production with all the stake holders actively involved. As producers, they rely on writers, actors and the hierarchy at CRTV to get the work done. When they are unable to live-produce, they broadcast productions from sister corporations in other African countries. Kenneth said that for two months he had been reproducing plays that were produced at Cologne during their training sessions and some from the programme exchange centre of the union of the national radio and TV Organisation of Africa, URTNA. They do not have enough radio play scripts and when they do get one or two, it requires resources (which they usually do not have) to sort out actors and the paraphernalia for production. They admitted having very impressive audience reaction, with some helping in initiating mobilisation strategies. Kenneth Asobo cited a case in the early nineteen nineties when the women's branch of a cultural and development association called Wimbum had to re-structure the approach in a common initiative project they had initiated for their folks back in the villages after listening to a radio play.

On the future of radio theatre in Cameroon as a whole, they were optimistic, stressing that the major obstacle was the incentives. Incentives would enable them to get the other stakeholders involved in a process that requires different interdependent actors ranging from the writers through them (the producers) to the management of CRTV or sponsors of the programmes.

Phase Three: Group Discussion

Most of the participants in the neighbourhood bar in Bamenda, the North West Regional capital, Cameroon were petit-traders locally known as “Bayam-Sellams.” The songs they sang echoed the sense of commitment and confidence in what they do. They sang in Pidgin English and after each song they would burst into laughter in appreciation of the unison of purpose that was in turn reflected in the intonation of new tunes. Determined to avoid an open-ended discussion that was likely in that circumstance, I reintroduced the topic with jibes at their proclaimed successes through a middle-aged woman who sat beside me. She went beyond a required brief comment on my jibes to re-introduce the group and their objectives, an interjection that paved the way for an informed and very lively discussion on the role arts in general and radio drama in particular play in their individual and collective lives. The following sums the facts of their situation.

They are a group of women who had created an association of ‘Bayam-Sellams’. The majority of them can barely read and write, having, for one reason or the other, dropped from school at the elementary level. They are very committed in running their homes and contributing their quota in the development of their society. They meet twice every month and reflect on their common interest. The local FM radio has helped them a great deal in broadcasting their songs thereby bringing in many more members and making their association known. They have a strong sense of oneness in purpose when issues that pertain to their well-being are concerned. Their songs draw a lot from their local cultural values. Some of them serve

as agents to a local peasant-farmers cooperative. It is thanks to them that many a peasant farmer are spared the trouble of carrying their crops (most of which are perishable) through the bad roads from the suburbs to the market places at the regional headquarters. Asked if they knew some Cameroonian writers, the women said in the negative. They did not even find the place for stories that are written, for that is for 'book people'. However, they listen to stories which they are told are written by writers on the radio. The story of a radio drama piece entitled "What Money Can't Buy" over Radio Hot-Cocoa, a local FM station readily comes to her mind. With the mention of Nanun (one of the main characters in the piece), another woman asked to know if I was Nanun, the household name of a *been-to* who joins his folks upon return from abroad and refuses to identify with their way of life. At the end of the exercise it would be garnered that besides singing and bi-monthly rendezvous, the teaming grouping of local women are mobilised, essentially and not exclusively, by radio. If radio in its broader sense has been portrayed here as a medium of inclusive education, radio theatre has been shown to be a tool for bottom-up development process. Eyoh, (1984, 18) has reminded us that:

Theatre by its very nature and particularly because of its communality and its fictionalised situations provides a forum whereby such communication can usually take place without the attending antagonisms, which would normally occur in a directly realistic situation.

This take on theatre is, of course, a universal one; Drama and theatre exist in practically every culture in the world, for every culture in the world has rituals, religious ceremonies, and story-telling and variant celebrations at different occasions. In all these occasions there is theatre in the making with performance/action and audience, the latter taking part in the performance. In any of these performances (whether it is playful improvisations like that of the Bamenda women seen above or the enactment of reality as obtained in Cameroon

Radio and Television Corporation' productions) the ultimate result is that a story is being told by someone from a certain perspective. Such story-telling processes may include playful improvisations created and enacted spontaneously as well as productions structured to be produced, enacted or performed serially. This story-telling provides an avenue for interaction and communication which advertently or inadvertently gives room for an expression of a cultural heritage along with experimentation and creative potential. This practice triggers an emotional and social development within both informal and formal settings. In the different modes of practices, traditional theatre format necessitates the coming together of both audience and actors for the enactment to ensue while Radio (and to an extent television drama) do not. Radio gives the audience the latitude to take part in the dramatic experience wherever it is but actively take part in the creative process as a radio drama production engages the listeners' imagination and perception of action in the process.

The Bamenda women in focus in this section explore the potential of community radio for their own good. One can see the usefulness of Radio Hot Cocoa in their everyday lives. The radio transmitter has responded to their needs by contributing to their education in a very utilitarian fashion. Through entertainment, which in fact, is the objective of community radio, they are brought together to interact in ways that they would not have been able to. Radio Hot Cocoa has created an avenue for reflection and action. They participate and express their individual concerns and their take of social, economic and political issues in their community. This Ross Kidd's (1984, 21) propounds:

A community Radio draws our participation and expression of popular concerns and analysis, overcoming people's fears and rationalisations and building confidence and identity, stimulating discussions and a critical understanding of problems, contradictions, and strategies for action, stirring people's emotions and eventually mobilising them for action. Radio plays can thus be used to develop the

awareness of rural populations on the need for inclusion of different demographics in the community.

Through an extensive use of local coloration (local languages and cultural expressions) radio theatre brings local reality and culture to the limelight thereby restoring the waning confidence in the local community; this is what obtains with the Bamenda Market women who before their mobilisation by the local radio station were a more marginalised lot in an essentially male chauvinistic society. They employ radio performances, which at first sight look like pure entertainment, for their common good. In this, Entertainment and education work hand-in-hand, but producing the material that mass moved these women of Bamenda Food Market is very different from writing either pure entertainment or pure instructional messages. The secret of creating an effective development-oriented drama lies in blending the entertainment format with the educational message. To create this blend, the writer and the producers of Radio Hot Coffee understood the intended audience, the purpose and objectives of the radio drama, the message the drama is to impart and how best to express the intended audience, the advantages of the structure for introducing and repeating social messages naturally and succinctly. They have to think out believable role-model characters to convey the message, motivate and sustain change in the audience. They must frame in emotions in the drama in order to attract and hold the listeners' attention as well as inspire new behaviour. In brief, they must engineer and foster listening literacy in the radio audience and uphold the power of radio as a medium for entertainment and education. All these aspects are crucial for both entertainment and education. The women emerge as beneficiaries living a profitable social change in Bamenda thanks to them.

As indicated earlier, education and entertainment have never been mutually exclusive. In an examination of the meanings of the two words, *Tesaurus* (2009, 1009) illustrates how easily and convincingly they can be used interchangeably. The etymology of the English word "entertainment" is rooted in the Latin word

“intertenere.” The prefix “inter” here means “among,” and the verb “tenere” means “to hold.” The whole word “intertenere,” therefore, has the meaning “to hold or command one’s attention.” Like “entertainment”, “education” also traced in Latin, the prefix “e” meaning “out of” and the verb “ducere” meaning “to lead.” Originally, the verb “educare” meant “to assist at the birth of a child.” It now means “to rear or to raise” or, in other words, “to lead a person forward or encourage a person’s growth and development.” “Enter-educate,” therefore, would be defined as “commanding the attention of the audience while encouraging their growth and development,” and entereducate serial drama can be understood as a powerful method of motivating positive social change and personal development. It is worth noting that “entertainment” does not necessarily imply “amusement.” A wide range of emotions and situations can attract and hold the attention of listeners.

The entire survey and interviews speak to and vindicate the hypothetical assertion at the beginning of this chapter that is readily seen on the title itself. Literature becomes functional when media is used not only to facilitate its dissemination, but to give it a new and more appealing impetus. This popular attribute that radio brings to literature is an invaluable contribution as seen in the anecdote on Guinness-Cameroon collection and its historical significance and Hamman Schulz’s experience in Zaire. The impact of radio theatre is almost always imperceptible, but it remains enormous in re-animating local cultural values. The playwright, Musinga, might have some reservations about the direct utilitarian value of radio drama, but the other aspects of the survey (samples of the producers and the audience) demonstrate the level of influence that radio drama has on the people even if imperceptibly.



*Kano, Nigeria. A Group listening to a radio play
Courtesy: Farm Radio International*

Radio Theatre Aesthetics: Engineering Development Initiatives on the Air

Radio Theatre offers a novel phenomenon that corroborates the underlying aim of Development Theatre. Radio produces audiences of sizes hitherto unimaginable; and it gives a new impetus to the traditional theory of crowd-formation and group-thinking. It reduces the relevance of the eyes in social communication and uplifts the role of the human voice and the auditory sense to a new realm of import. Aesthetically employing radio for theatre increases the scope of this relevance as it establishes a vibrant space for cultural reanimation. Expounding on the technical relevance of radio, Hadley (1971, 18) puts it vis-à-vis the printed word thus:

Not only is the radio easy to listen to, it is likewise more personal, and living people arrest our attention and sustain our interest better than do printed words. The very transience of broadcast possesses fascination. Printed words endure, they are polished and perfected and lack the spontaneity and human fallibility of the single performance. A voice broadcasting news possesses an intimacy and eventfulness absent from the evening newspaper. If the voice is that of a well-known radio favourite, it seems friendly; we respond to it and even obey its commands.

Hadley's assertion lends credence to the role radio plays in social mobilisation and therefore cultural re-animation. The listener has an imaginative sense of participation in a common activity. He knows that others are simultaneously listening with him, and in this way he feels a community of interest with people outside his home. Only in a vague sense is the printed word a social stimulus, whereas radio fills us with what the reputable British Radio Playwright and producer, Alan Beck (1996, 34) describes as a "consciousness of a kind which at times grows into an impression of vast social unity." Radio is therefore, much more effective in bringing about concerted opinion

and action. Nevertheless, it takes good skills on the part of the producer to get listeners to invest in the fictional world of radio drama. The producer employs the peculiar aesthetics of this sub-genre to create dialogue and movement as well as convincing acting that is more than the words on script. He or she ensures that the actors live the words and give them the dramatic movement and life.

From the new historicist's standpoint some of the selected productions under study trigger the developmental initiatives found in mainstream Development Theatre. In different, albeit related shades, the selected plays produced present a society that has changed, is changing and is grappling with crucial challenges. We discern in this chapter that the playwrights and producers are informed by their societies and that appreciating the works from the new historicist stand point provides a more convenient universe of discourse that vindicates the driving force behind Development Theatre in Anglophone Africa.

The focus in this chapter will be on the following productions: *Koffi the Village Doctor* by Nora Elu Mumba (produced by the British broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 1986, *The Marriage that never Was* by Becky Ndiva (produced by the National Radio Service of the Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation, CRTV, in 1986). *The Step Mother* by Wenaru Amba Mulewa (produced, courtesy of the programme exchange centre of the Union of National Radio and TV Organisation of Africa, URTNA, 1987). *The Incredible Madam Ida* by Victor Elame Musinga (produced by the South West provincial service of the Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation, CRTV radio— in 1984), Victor Epie Ngome's *Not yet the Name* (produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 1986) and *The First Defence* (produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC in 1987). Besides discussing the aesthetic components of these productions and their effectiveness, we will pay attention to development radio in South Africa where radio has been used extensively for the fight against HIV AIDS and Malawi where radio has brought villagers to the forefront of local development initiatives.

Synopses of Selected Productions

In Nora Elu Mumba's *Koffi the Village Doctor*, Koffi is a celebrity of an imaginary village in Africa who comes home as a medical doctor after a decade of studies in the United Kingdom. His decision to settle and practice in the local community in order to help his people who have remained backward in many areas of development initiatives comes as a pleasant surprise to the villagers who expect him to settle in the city as generally obtained in the dispensation. As the news of an imminent rural health clinic spreads in the village, it threatens the age-old fame of the well known "renowned herbalist in the line of herbalists that spans generations" in the village and beyond. It takes a great deal of negotiation between Koffi who is bent on improving the quality of health care of his people with modern medicine and Okonkwo the herbalist. At the end, both modern and traditional medicines have to exist side by side. The cohabitation of traditional and modern medicine dramatically revamps the health of Koffi's people.

Becky Ndiva's *The Marriage that Never Was* treats the theme of broken marriage engagement that has been provoked by the pressure of unexpected happenings to the bridegroom while he is studying on a scholarship in the United States of America. George's scholarship has been withdrawn on the basis of his poor performance in college. His teacher, Sindi Herrison who has fallen in love with him opts to sponsor George for the rest of his study period in the United States on condition that George reciprocates the love she has for him. Frightened by the hostile economic climate back in Cameroon, George decides to give in to Sindi's proposal and after his studies, Sindi vows to return to Cameroon with George whom she says represents all she has in life. At the airport on their arrival in Cameroon, Stella who had been waiting in joyful ecstasy to receive her husband finds all her expectations dashed against a rock as George arrives with a white lady who clings on him and constantly refers to George as 'my husband'.

In Mulewa's *The step Mother* David Bayema, a widower marries Judith seven years after the death of his wife. His son Joseph had strongly advised against the father's intention, which he finds very unhealthy for the motherless home. After consultation with his brother, Gideon, Bayema decides to get married to Judith. Joseph repeatedly finds it difficult to live with Judith as his mother and eventually leaves for the city where he hopes to find a more accommodating home. In the city Joseph does not feel at ease with himself and as he drives back home he gets into an accident that takes away his life.

In Victor Musinga's *The Incredible Madam Ida*, Madam Ida is unable to cement her marriage because she cannot have a baby after six years in it. All appears lost as her medical report attributes this defect to eighteen abortions she committed in her hey-days. She hides away the report. Undaunted, Ida trickily owns and nurses the pregnancy of a teen-age girl, who is afraid to have a baby outside wedlock, for fear of her parents' wrath on her. In an uncanny manner, Ida hides her plot until the reception party at her home for the new baby when the 'top of the lid' is blown off by the very teenage girl who was her accomplice, to the embarrassment of all present. Unable to face her husband Koboko, the long arm of the law, and the talking world, and, unwilling to trample on her pride, Ida commits suicide in a most dramatic and incredible manner.

Victor Epic Ngome's *Not yet the Name* addresses the excesses of the Cameroonian political barons who take advantage of money, position and power to sexually exploit teen-age girls of the enclaved areas during routine visits that are usually described as "meet-the-people tours." Mrs. Ewange accepts, with reservation, that her daughter Gwame should offer room service to His Excellency on the condition that the latter comes with his wife. His Excellency does not come with his wife and after the "tour" Gwame is reported pregnant to the father Ewange who vows to face his Excellency. It takes the timely intervention of the local parliamentarian, who initiated the affair in the first place, for Gwame to accept the sum of three

hundred thousand francs CFA for all the expenses that his expectant daughter would incur upon delivery.

In *The first Defence* Epie Ngome focuses on juvenile delinquency and the unavoidable wrath that haunts its perpetrators. Mrs. Patience Ndomé Ebango is in the duck for stealing a baby twenty-five years after she threw away her own baby. Moses, now twenty-five, after growing with a dedicated foster mother into a barrister at law has as his first case “The Ndomé Ebango case.” It takes a light-hearted conversation with her lawyer for Mrs. Ebango to come face to face with divine retribution, as she realises that the baby she abandoned twenty five years ago is struggling in court to save her from the spectre of her own past. Her lawyer, Moses Nyowe Ngando, is the victim of her hitherto hidden crime. Moses and his foster mother meet Mrs. Ndomé Ebango in her sick bed in the hospital where the latter wills all her property to her son and his foster mother.

Writing for Radio Production

Writing for radio is foregoing the theatrical spell, and everything visual that the theatre provides, but to gain in other respects, the medium’s flexibility, its adaptability, its evocative spell and its availability. Radio happens inside the listeners’ head. Whether driving, flying, cooking or painting, one can be simultaneously taking part in a performance. It is a medium of very elastic possibilities. The script is only skeletal and becomes meaningful only when produced. In producing therefore, the producer and his editors can adapt a given play to suit a defined objective. The producers of the above-mentioned plays employ the available radio drama paraphernalia in creating the required sound effects, music, silence, and dialogue to render drama much more than the words on the scripts. In this way, the medium brings to the limelight those hidden or obscured trends in the society that Development Theatre sought to address. Such traits include: Juvenile delinquency, sexual promiscuity, greed, and obsession over Western gadgets at the detriment of local values, lack of confidence in self, and ignorance. The plays that explore these

themes were not yet Radio Drama per se, until such moments that they were aired. The availability and success of Radio Drama depends almost entirely on the “invisible” producer who directs the play for diffusion in the studio. Most Radio Drama critics do not see and give the due credit to this hidden person. The playwright does not do more than initiate the existence of Radio Drama when he/she writes. As Peter Lewis (1977, 29) corroboratively asserts, “Radio Drama is non-existent without the producer.” A play that is written for radio, and is only experienced and elucidated on the printed page is a failed radio play. Consequently, the tools required for the production of Radio Drama require examination.

The quantity and quality of tools at the disposal of the producer of radio Drama would vary, depending on the context of the production, the kind of play and the aim of the production. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which has an outstanding tradition of producing radio drama and promoting its production in developing countries, has very modern and sophisticated tools in its studios. The corporation has an amazing repertoire of sound archives with thousands of plays that have been produced over the years. With the management of the corporation’s blessings that come primarily by way of funding and drilling human resources, the radio Drama Department of the BBC sets the springboard for radio drama practitioners around the world, especially in the Third World.

At the heels of the British Broadcasting Corporation is Radio Deutsche Welle which has over the years developed vibrant Radio Drama programmes with focus on Africa. The organisation has organised several training workshops for African Radio Drama practitioners at its headquarter at Cologne, Germany. Two Cameroonian radio playwrights, Victor Epie Ngome and Becky Ndivi, besides CRTV Radio Play producers, Kenneth Asobo and David Chuyeh Bunyui, benefited from these workshops in the mid nineteen eighties and early nineteen nineties, respectively. Like the BBC, Radio Deutsche Welle has high-tech equipment for production.

In Africa the picture is different, as it reflects the general state of poverty and inadequate means in other spheres of life. Unlike their counterparts in the developed world, African producers go through all forms of improvisations to produce Radio Drama in studios that are for the most part equipped with obsolete equipment. Consequently, while the producers in London and Cologne manipulate the available modern tools to achieve the effective use of voices, music, sound effects and the recording and editing technology, their counterparts in Africa are employing simple and unsophisticated equipment with the result that their productions are often not as convincing as what obtains in the developed world where most of them got trained. Listening to the BBC-produced Epie Ngome's *Not Yet the Name* (1986) and *The First Defence* (1982) and CRTV-produced Becky Ndive's *The Marriage that Never Was* (1986) paints a clear picture of these differences in the quality of Radio Drama.

Radio drama can be presented in three different styles: as an independent drama, as a series, or as a serial. An independent drama is akin to a short story that usually lasts no longer than one hour. Epie Ngome's *The First Defence* falls in this category because it tells the complete story in one broadcast. A serial is usually shorter and may be as short as five minutes. It could be broadcast as a brief segment on a thirty-minute radio magazine programme. The drama series is a collection of independent dramas that use the same major characters in each program. For example, Mumba's *Koffi the Village Doctor* could appear in further programs, with each underscoring a different theme, and teaching a different message. Here extra characters might appear in some stories, with some appearing in more than one story, but none would appear as regularly as the been-to doctor and the traditional ruler in the setting. Each drama in the series would be completed in one program. Some of the programme titles for the series on Mumba's script might be: *Koffi's Homecoming*, *Coming Back Home*, *Our Son Has Come Back to Us*, etc.

Also frequently termed a “sit com,” a situation comedy is a series that is intended to be amusing or, at least, to have a happy ending. Situation comedies are now more frequent on television, but they were more frequent on radio in the nineteen seventies and nineteen eighties. They tend to be popular with the audience, even when they make use of exaggerated or farfetched plots. The serial is an ongoing story that continues from one broadcast to another. Each episode is open-ended, and the story is picked up and continued in the next episode. A serial can be likened to a novel, with the story is divided into chapters, each chapter leading to the next. A serial may be as short as fifteen minutes per episode aired daily, weekly, monthly or by-monthly. It may take as long as the need and resources are available. A continuing drama that is presented in fewer than six episodes is usually referred to as a mini-series or two or three “part” drama. If Becky Ndivé’s *The Marriage that Never Was* were to be made into a serial, the story would not end where it does. Rather, it would continue into more episodes with other characters and other plots introduced to enrich the story. For example, George might find it impossible to do as his people would expect and take Sindi off to a different part of the world, where they could live together as husband and wife. George’s family would be very disappointed and may actually resort to looking for their son whom they think has been brainwashed by Sindi Harrison. The abandoned bride would be at a crossroads; thus the story could continue for a long time, following the various adventures of George.

Although this chapter in particular focuses on radio drama as a tool for social mobilisation that lays the groundwork for development initiatives, the dramatic and creative potential of a piece needs to be intact for the conscientisation process to be engaging. Therefore, a successful development-oriented radio drama production depends on a strong plot for the radio drama that fulfils the following aims upon production:

An emotional experience

Emotional involvement in a production allows listeners to live out their own hopes and concerns vicariously. Most people do not freely give vent to their emotions, but keep them bottled up inside. Characters in dramas can express strong emotions “on behalf of” the audience, who then experiences an emotional release. It is this emotional catharsis that makes drama so powerful. The added advantage of serial drama in particular is that the characters in its multiple, ongoing plots can demonstrate realistic ways for listeners to achieve personal relief from their own everyday issues.

An audience story

People are interested in other people. Dramatic details about the tragedies and triumphs in the lives of other people, who are just like themselves, will always interest listeners. It is people, not messages, who make the thrill in drama; thus peopling in any work is very important. Serial dramas must focus on the characters who demonstrate the message as they go about their daily lives. In the episode where Joseph gets remorseful in Mulewa’s *The Step Mother*, for example, the audience pays attention to the serial’s message on the affair carried out by Joseph’s father because they are gripped by the context in which Joseph’s mother passed-on less than a year ago.

Local colorations

The drama should reflect the customs of the audience for which it is intended. In some cultures, for example, young people customarily address their elders with respectful prefixes; elsewhere, else where there is no such prefixes. In some cultures, people remove their shoes before entering a house, or offer tea to visitors. Other cultures emphasize praying before undertaking any new venture. Nearly all cultures have traditional holidays or days of celebration observed in special ways. Besides, colloquial expressions also enhance the drama’s attraction for listeners. The writer should become aware of religious expressions, proverbs, fables and other colloquial expressions widely known and commonly used by the community. It

is difficult to transplant a social development drama in its original form from one culture to another. Even in cultures that seem similar on the surface, there are subtle differences which must be acknowledged and reflected if a serial is to be effective as a model for behavioural change. Throughout a serial, the writer must acknowledge the local culture and make use of its habits and idiosyncrasies. It is here that the audience profile and the writer's personal knowledge of the audience become so important.

Concepts rather than words

The reason for using drama rather than a lecture format is to get away from didacticism. Because it is the medium of the imagination, radio is an ideal instrument for conveying ideas, as long as the writer conveys these ideas through the lives and conversations of realistic characters, not through didactic speeches. A major strength of the dramatic serial is its ability to demonstrate what life is like when new attitudes and practices are adopted. In learning situations, demonstration is more effective than talk. The writer should create characters who can act as role models for listeners by demonstrating a growing understanding of the new ideas presented and by showing listeners how to adopt desired behaviours. One strong role model is worth a thousand words of instruction.

Humour

Everybody enjoys a touch of humour in life. While a story needs not be all funny or even partly so, it helps to have occasional amusing scenes. Some writers find it useful to create a comic who has a great sense of humour or is frequently involved in funny situations. An important rule, however, is that a serious message should not be delivered through a comic character. Since listeners are accustomed to laughing at comic characters, they are not likely to take the words of comics seriously when they deliver a valuable educational message. Humour differs markedly from culture to culture, so the writer must know and appreciate the types of situations and characters that the intended audience finds amusing.

Optimism

While a drama may include difficult, even nasty, characters who are opposed to new ways, it is difficult to educate people by telling them only what they should not do. Sometimes, even mentioning the negative side of a situation serves as reinforcement.

Trust

Creating trust in the listening audience is critical to bringing about social change through radio drama. Listeners must have confidence in the story and in the message. To give the drama a sense of authority, role model characters should closely resemble the type of people whom listeners respect in their community. Trust is further enhanced by accurate, appropriate, and consistent information. This can be assured by constant use of the Writer's Brief, which contains the precise message or information to be included in the drama as well as definitions of key words and phrases.

Emotional Involvement

Even though a radio serial can reach many people in a community, it is not sufficient to spread the word. By involving the listeners emotionally, the serial can motivate them to pass on what they hear to their families and friends. The writer can encourage this by demonstrating through role models in the serial how listeners who already have adopted the desired behaviour can help others to understand the new ways and change their behaviour.

Originality

The writer should try to avoid a stereotyped story that follows a predictable pattern, even when dealing with a problem resulting from a known and finite set of causes, such as AIDS. The typical drama dealing with AIDS, for example, would feature a young man who behaves irresponsibly in the belief that he could not possibly contract the disease. Inevitably he succumbs to the disease, and all the "good" characters learn from his demise. An alternative approach might be to focus on an AIDS victim who is not all "bad." Although he may

have contracted AIDS from promiscuous, unprotected sex, he might have improved a friend's life, not by warning him against AIDS, but, for example, by bequeathing the friend a bicycle that allows him to earn a living as a messenger. This differentiates the story from others on the same topic and gives it a positive thrust despite the tragic situation. The multi-plot nature of the serial gives the writer the opportunity to fulfil all aims of plot development. While no single plot will achieve every aim, the combination of the main plot and various subplots can encompass all ten aims comfortably and create a foundation for a successful blending of plot and message.

Dialogue: Beyond Scripts

If dialogue is crucial in theatre as a whole, it is more crucial for a radio play. It is dialogue that renders a radio play full-bodied and dramatic. In radio theatre, it is not so much the beauty of the language or profundity of thought on the script that matters, but the effectiveness of the production which would convey the meaning in the listeners' 'silence stage in the head'. The actors in the radio play live the words and give them movement and life by often making extensive use of improvisation. Quite often, they change the words in the script into language that they find easier to say or that they believe is more appropriate to the characters they are portraying. In drama geared towards social change, extensive improvisation can cause real problems; even a small change in wording can confuse the meaning of a message or make information inaccurate. For this reason, the writer should take care to script all dialogue exactly as the actors should present it. In some contexts, it is difficult to find actors who are sufficiently literate to read scripts accurately and convincingly. In such a case, it is better to have the actors learn their lines ahead of the recording date, rather than have them make up lines as they go along. Even in brunch show productions there should be careful handling of the renditions. The most important consideration in creating natural dialogue is that it should reflect the speaking habits of the audience for which it is intended. In many

parts of Africa, everyday conversation is not expressed in full and grammatically correct sentences. Even the educated class are more at ease speaking in broken English or broken French in informal contexts. People generally use incomplete sentences, code-switching, code mixing and interjections. Radio dialogue should be so natural that listeners believe they are listening in on a true life conversation. Dialogue in Radio Drama should not sound like lectures, but should offer a strong sense of spontaneity. Most of the plays under analysis in this chapter originally bring together the technical devices in the process of dramatic dialogue.

Victor Epie Ngome appears just as much at ease with the radio medium as in script drama. Shaddrack Ambanasom's praise of him in *Education of the Deprived* (2003) would be inadequate if one were to refer only to *What God has put Asunder* (1992), which is Ngome's most acclaimed script piece. Ambanasom's praise may become commensurate to the playwright's repertoire if he does explore Epie Ngome's works in other artistic areas, especially radio drama, music not withstanding. *The first Defence* stands amongst his best at production on radio, especially in terms of the manner in which the BBC producer employs dialogue. Though Epie Ngome, like any other radio playwright, loses the visible theatrical elements in this play, his producer at the BBC brilliantly offers dialogue without visual competition. His lines are apt; acquire the full meaning and mood such that even an ordinary conversation sounds more significant in the dark than it otherwise would. This is the case when at the beginning of *The First Defence*, Moses insists on taking the Mrs. Ebango case for his first case, in spite of the limited chances of winning it:

Psychiatrist: *Moses, what is this that I hear about you taking up the Ndome Ebango case? I must say I could hardly believe my ears. Your first defence and you go for an impossible case...*

Moses: *Maybe, but I decided to defend that.*

Psychiatrist: *I must say it also seems a bit odd. Why don't you take that armed robbery case? Hmmmm? From what I have heard the police*

evidence is pretty flimsy. And, at least, you have a good chance. I mean how she...

Moses: *Doc, Doc, Doc, your job as the court psychiatrist is to analyse the motives of defendants referred to you by the court....*

Psychiatrist: *I am not deluding myself about your innocence, Moses; we all know she is guilty....*

Moses: *But someone has to bring the court's attention to the human side of such a hideous crime*

In this extract, radio is found to be unleashing its multiplicity of meanings more naturally. The dialogue between the Psychiatrist and Moses takes place late into the night. But the producer's ability to match dialogue with context in time and space in the studio brings to light what would otherwise be rather dull and banal. This is because of the dexterity in which the BBC producer of the play employs his tools to infuse life in the dialogue. A listener who gives the above lines a chance would evoke the mood and the setting with relative ease. The BBC producer does justice to *The first Defence* by selecting and orchestrating the appropriate studio paraphernalia in this scene. The sound effect at this scene supports the story, and more importantly, it suggests action. The sound off, the quick footsteps, suggests the Psychiatrist's arrival. It also ties in with the mood of surprise that he exhibits in his utterances. Similarly, Moses' monosyllabic interjections corroborate his determination to take the Ebango case in spite of the risk associated with it.

In *The First Defence* Epie Ngome matches the dialogue to the characters. The style and tone of the dialogue above change to suit the personality of each character in each context. While the actors employ appropriate accents for different characters, for example the Psychiatrist and Moses, the producer has assumed his responsibility of creating dialogue that reveals the true nature of each character. Highly-educated, professional city dwellers like Moses and the Psychiatrist are more sophisticated in their language with Moses giving the additional twist in legal linguistic register. Even though the

two characters come from similar social circles, they are apt in having individual speech patterns and idiosyncrasies that express their personalities. Epie Ngome and his BBC producer use dialogue artfully to assist in the depiction of characters in *The First Defence*.

Moreover, like in *Not Yet the Name*, the characters in *The first Defence* are contrasted sharply not only in personality, but also in mode of speech. The stage of Epie Ngome's *The first Defence* remains in the listener's mind, but it is so 'real' because of the change in mood reflected in the tones of the dialogue of the play vis-a-vis the different contexts/scenes. The listener 'sees' Mrs. Ndome Ebango in the dock at the beginning of the second scene not only because of the dialogue between Moses and the psychiatrist in scene one that ends with the latter vowing to be in court, but more so because of the opening statement in the court scene when the prosecutor submits: "Your worship, it is clear beyond all reasonable doubts that the accused killed an innocent baby. My learned friend of the defence is doing his honour to this court...." The exchanges that follow continue to paint the picture of the court scene in the mind of the listener who is glued to his radio receiver. The orderliness, the precision in pronouncements and the knocks on the table by the judge are reminiscent of a typical court scenario a listener would identify with.

The dialogue in *Not Yet the Name* is constructed by infusing haunting rhetorical questions that beg for answers from the imaginary morally depraved society where responsible political leaders steer the wheel of sexual promiscuity. One listens with attention as a supposed man of integrity, Honourable Ndutu, pleads with Mr. Ewange not to betray him by making it public that he is the one who has impregnated his daughter. In the same vein, honourable Sale's pleas for Mrs. Ewange (in the opening scene of the play) to grant her daughter permission to offer room service to the august delegation from the capital shows the degree to which local politicians have sunk.

Slackville West (1977, 221) avers that:

Radio is in fact susceptible of carrying far more degrees of dramatisation than the stage or the screen because of the extreme flexibility of the medium and its wide power of imaginative suggestion. Even the 'straight talk' has an element of drama in it, conferred by the listener's focus on the personality of the unseen speaker, and by the shape of the talk itself, which has to be designed to grip and hold attention from first to last. From the moment that the central narration becomes interspersed with characterised voices, used for illustrative purposes like pictures in a book, drama becomes overt. This is perhaps the most characteristic form of dramatised broadcast.

In addition to these forceful impacts unleashed by the radio medium is the fact that the actor/speaker during the performance is addressing each listener personally. The writer/producer carries the stage around with him to his multitudinal audience. The likely absence of the monotony usually occasioned by the several possible eventualities in a theatre argues for the use of dialogue to good effect in radio drama.

The art of dialogue in radio drama is at best very sophisticated. To convey information without sounding artificial or stilted, the radio playwright takes into consideration the structure of scenes and individual lines with admirable precision. It is not a matter of stringing together conversations. Like in Epie Ngome's *The first Defence* and *Not Yet the Name*, the CRTV-Radio producer of Victor Musinga *Incredible Madam Ida* employs dialogue with amazing dexterity. Ida is the embodiment of this dexterity which she demonstrates fully in her conversation with Caro, the teenage girl whom she tricks to hand her baby to her (Ida) upon delivery.

Ida: *What will your friends say of you? Your parents? What becomes of your education if you have to nurse a baby? You see this arrangement is to your own benefit. Think about it. Others have done same before why not you?...*

Caro: *I feel really sick about this. I had not given this multiple thought about the repercussion of having to nurse a baby at sixteen. Auntie, accept my profound gratitude. But how do we go about it? My mother....*

Ida: *Oh no! I shall not advise you to abort it....Do not add the shame to your family...I suggest a better solution to your dilemma.*

Caro: *Auntie please, tell me what to do and I will do it. Oh what can I do? Where do I go to? What...*

Ida: *Look here, dear. I care so much about you and will not wait and see you get into trouble. Look, I will take full care of the baby after delivery. I will also take care of all the maternity charges. I feel so much for young girls like you because I understand their dilemma.*

Caro: *What happens at home when I can no longer hide the pregnancy?*

Ida: *Do not bother, we shall devise a means.*

In this extract, the producer of Musinga's play builds up the scene that exposes Ida's desperate quest for harmony in her matrimonial home. This particular dialogue between Ida and Caro is pivotal in the overall structure of the play. Both Ida and Caro express thoughts over the subject that are informed by their immediate social realities, though unlike Caro, Ida feigns goodwill and expresses regret at the moral depravity that prevails in the society. Also of relevance is the age discrepancy that exists between the two characters. While Ida is older and more experienced, Caro is younger and still entering the world that offers plenty of the new world's deceitful pleasure and takes away the means to attain such pleasures thereby landing the youth, whom she represents, into such a moral puddle. Musinga and his Radio Buea producer have succeeded to a large extent in pacing the dialogue in *The Incredible Madam Ida* to suit the action. The characters' dialogue paces to fit the action of the drama. Ida and Caro conspire for Ida to take over Caro's baby upon delivery. The tone of this scene is soft and solemn as opposed to the scene where the conspiracy is betrayed which is tense and filled with a strong sense of betrayal at home.

Thus the producer portrays his expertise in infusing life to dialogue in *Ida* as *Ida's* tone and mood change as soon as she leaves Caro and picks a conversation with a neighbourhood acquaintance, Namondo. If dialogue is skilfully employed in Musinga's *Ida*, especially in production, it is not the case with Mulewa's *The Step Mother*. In *the Step Mother* the beautifully crafted dialogue on script loses its quality in production. The play, when read as a play for the radio, sounds very skilfully composed in its dialogue. However, the poor voice-over of the brother to Mr. David Bayema almost damages the smooth flow of the enactment in production. Whenever Gideon speaks, he does not capture the mood with his tone and rendition. His accent is inappropriate for each purpose. This flaw, however, does not have much negative impact on the overall production because Gideon is a passive character.

The producers of both plays assemble casts in which every speaker is distinguished from the other, yet all the speakers contribute to the harmony of their respective productions, in spite of the weaknesses of the last scene of Mulewa's *The step Mother*. Conversely, Becky Ndiva's *The Marriage that Never Was* is a very poor play on script both in terms of manner and matter. The CRTC producer makes a better play of the script by putting very talented and creative characters in production - characters who master the subject matter and the context that Ndiva sets out to portray. She begins her script with an arresting question of the financial inability of sending George to the home University. She suddenly, without any sound or pause on the stage direction, introduces a letter from the Ministry of Education that informs George's parents of his scholarship award. Ndiva's CRTC producer has made up for these lapses and the production is, to a considerable extent, a success in spite of the poor management of the opening scene. In the same vein, Nora Ela Mumba's *Koffi the Village Doctor* reads banal, but comes alive amazingly when produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation, (BBC).

One of the significant elements in dialogue which is very relevant in conveying meaning in radio drama is the rhythm with which words flow - that rightness in the phrasing and manner of articulation, which makes the listener feel that it could not have been said in any better manner during production. Most of the plays here in production are so well presented in this wise that when a listener is cut off from following the play for a minute, he would still be able to identify the different characters. It is so easy to identify Mrs. Ndome Ebango from Mrs. Patience Ndongye in Epie Ngome's *The first Defence*, not only from what they say but, more importantly, from the way they say them. Their styles of rendition are so different and reflect their changing moods in the different scenes. It is the same trend in Mumba's *Koffi the Village Doctor* where the villagers in their joy and curiosity on the occasion of Koffi's return from abroad conduct Koffi to the chief's palace where a high profile discussion about progress and development in the village ensures. Through this apt use of such dramatic dialogue on the air, the producers offer their audiences an alley of themes that generally focus on moral and social issues within different communities. The portrayal is generally done in such a recognisably topical manner that it catches the attention of listeners. To the keen listener, the pictures of the characters in dialogue gradually and steadily take shape. For example, Musinga's *Incredible Madam Ida* has remained a stereotype to several listeners of CRTV Buea. This is because the style the producer employs here is very effective in telling the story of a woman who is being haunted by her mischievous past.

At the threshold of the process of dialogue is the voice-over that produces the words in the process; words that are very suggestive instruments as the vehicle for dialogue. The process of conjuring images and facts from the microphone to the air waves is simple: as a word is articulated, the listeners become designers, producers, scene shifters and the theatre itself. For example, the moment the prosecutor in Epie Ngome's *The first defence* uses words like "your worship", "accused", "innocent", "defence" and "court" in quick succession, one easily locates the context and the point at issue. This

is where a radio playwright/producer becomes very economical and more imaginative than his counterparts of conventional theatre art or television. On stage for example, a character can be seen sitting on a chair, picking up a glass, recapping an incident or reflecting over a mishap or a fortune. On radio the playwright has to use his imagination to express depth of feeling, implicitly and obliquely and in a matter of seconds. Mulewa does this in *The Step Mother*. In a few sentences, she establishes an atmosphere of loss at the home of Mr. David Bayema, vividly paints the locale where most of the action is to take place, carries her plot a stage forward, gives a new insight into his leading character, Joseph, and simultaneously diverts us with humour and suspense. At production, *The Step Mother* becomes very rich in overtones. The second part of the play, where Mr. Balema decides to marry Judith arrests our attention even more convincingly.

Despite the lapses either in production or on scripts, the plays employ dialogue as the way of giving information to achieve the goal of having successful radio plays. However, for a good radio play to be successful, one has to go beyond the dialogue parameter to the sound. In other words, radio play production involves more than the writer/producer paying attention to just the dialogue.

Sound Effects in Radio Drama

Radio is essentially, though not exclusively, sound. In order to re-create a radio play from the script such that it becomes full-bodied and carries its full impact, the sound is produced and given its place because the play is ‘read’ or ‘watched’ in the listeners imagination. The radio constructs its physical setting and props on sound through words, voices, music and gesticulations. Apart from a few lapses, sound effects are achieved in these plays to good effect by altering the lengths of sequence, number of people speaking, pace of dialogue and volume. MacNeice (1979, 179) has stated in a very categorical manner that “the first thing a radio writer should do is to forget about literature and concentrate on sound.” What one can discern from MacNeice’s assertion is that without sound one would not talk

of radio theatre. In the same trajectory, Irving Stone (1960, xii) writes of the art of a radio play being the art of conjuring up sounds at the radio dramatist's direction and then keeping them constant on the background screen of the mind, while the story plays itself on the forward part of the stage. It is the art of hearing sounds as an integral part of the action and conflict.

Radio Drama deprives the audience of the site of action. It, however, soars beyond the limitations of this physical setting enjoyed by producers of stage and or television drama by the adequate use of sound effects. When an opening sound effect (music for example), or first word is heard in a radio drama, it is more than just the opening of the curtain which would take some minutes for the audience of a traditional playwright/producer on stage. For the radio drama audience, it is the beginning of the play itself. Within the five or so seconds of the opening sound effect, the radio playwright with a topical subject matter reaches out to his/her listeners with a firm grip. In real life, there are always sounds in the background, most of which go unnoticed because they are a natural, everyday part of the surroundings and because other senses, such as sight, touch, and smell, often override sound. To be truly naturalistic, therefore, a radio serial would have to have non-stop sound going on under all the dialogue. This would be confusing and overwhelming because on radio all sounds are noticed as listeners try to pick up and process all incoming information. The good radio writer is careful and selective in the use of sound effects; he or she avoids the temptation to over-use them. The primary rule for the use of sound effects in radio serials is to avoid them unless they are absolutely essential. The use of a sound bed, for example, when not absolutely necessary, may mar the plot of the production. A sound bed provides continuous sound throughout a scene. In a market scene, for example, the writer might call for a Market Background Sound Bed that would add noises typical of a market throughout the scene, such as trucks, people shouting, people buying and selling, and the like. The sound bed that obtains at the arrival of Koffi in Mumba's *Koffi the Village Doctor* is a good reflection of the euphoria that characterises the arrival of an

African village celebrity from the Western world. But as seen in this same production, continuous background sound of this nature can be troublesome because of the frequent changes of scenes. This can force the writer to call constantly for a “cross fade” from one sound effect to another or to use music to mark every break between one scene and the next like what obtains in Ndiva’s *The Marriage that Never Was*. Such over-use of music to mark frequent scene breaks can be very distracting and can cause listeners to lose track of what is going on. Unless a continuous sound bed is an essential element of a particular scene, it is better to avoid it. A similar, but less complicating effect can be achieved by establishing the sound briefly at the beginning of the scene and then gradually fading it down and out under the dialogue.

Sounds in Radio Drama fall under different categories. The five productions under discussion in this chapter employ different varieties of sound effect. How these convey the themes is the essential factor to the audience. In these productions we listen to sounds from human speech or dialogue with the use of the voice stream. Victor Epie Ngome’s *Not Yet the Name* is exemplary amongst the five in this. In it there are only two instances of other categories of sound. The first is the clinking of glasses during the reception in honour of the politicians, while the second is the footsteps of a furious Ewange, who, upon hearing of his teen-age daughter’s pregnancy, walks into the sitting room as he summons an emergency family meeting to discuss the ‘calamity’. The BBC producer of this play pays more attention to vocal sounds. This category is crucial as it develops and strengthens the plot of the drama by infusing life into what would otherwise be less real. The human voice carries a sense of reality that tends to pull attention more than a non-human sound. This category, unlike the non-vocalised sounds of human origin like footsteps, blasting of the horn of a car, revving of the engine of a car and scratching a person or an object, lends credence to the development of the plot and the themes in a given radio play. The producer of Mumba’s *Koffi the Village Doctor* infuses plenty of non-vocalised sounds of human origin in the production. This is in

consonant with the context of the arrival of the village celebrity from the Whiteman's land. From the preparatory phase of the occasion to Koffi's arrival in the play, the festive atmosphere is full of cacophonous bits that range from handclapping through drum-beating to hooting. The strong sense of change in the people's life style is echoed in this melange of bits. It is evident of a turning point in the life of the community cemented by Koffi's declaration at the chief's palace.

Non-vocalised sounds of sentient beings which are non-human, such as insects cricking and cattle mooing essentially suggest the setting and/or context. This is evident in Ndivé's *The Marriage that Never Was*, where the background cockcrow at the beginning of the play signals time and place. Before George tells the mother that he has a letter for her, one already imaginatively creates the physical stage of a sub-urban set-up in Anglophone Cameroon. The context of the letter and its effect trigger the cause-effect relationship that is so amateurishly done by the author on script but carefully hemmed by the producer.

Sounds that do not originate from living beings or that originate from none sentient objects like a rock falling, thunder roaring and wind blowing suggest the intensity and/or impact of an action in the radio play. Ndivé's *The Marriage that Never Was* again employs several of these as seen, for example, during George's arrival at the airport. The sound of the air plane's combustion engine during landing is indicative to the audience of George's arrival. In the same manner, the arrival of the august delegation in Epie Ngome's *Not yet the Name* is heralded by the hooting of car horns and background ululation slightly differing from the cacophonous court room in *The first Defence* when the president of the court calls for order by slamming his gravel on the table and adjourning the case for further inquiries to be made on both parties.

It is a herculean task to effectively illustrate the crucial relevance of sound effects in radio theatre in writing. No sound effect has any meaning when detached from the context that the writer's word establishes on it. For instance, at the reception party reserved for the

august delegation in Epie Ngome's *Not Yet the Name*, drinks being put in glasses could be taken for coffee, tea, wine, or Champagne or mistaken, if unidentified by the appropriate voice over, for a tap running or a stream babbling. But given the appropriate voice-over managed by the producer, one would easily decipher that the splashes are those of water, wine or beer during the reception organised by the local politicians in the imaginary peripheral setting of the play.

In some cases, as in Mulewa's *The Step Mother*, there is an introduction to the play at the beginning which pointedly presents the issue raised in the production. After the signature tune to the programme "Radio Theatre" on the air, the introduction of *The Step Mother* is presented as follows:

In today's edition we have a play entitled *The Step Mother*. The play is about Mr. David Bayema, a middle-aged man who is the General Manager of the National Coffee Exporting Company. David Bayema is a widower. He lives in the North West coast with his fourteen year-old son Joseph. As from when Bayema's wife died, he decided not to marry again for his son's sake. However, when he realised that he was sacrificing so much time for his son's sake, he decided to marry again considering that the boy was meek and understanding. But that was not the case. (*The Step Mother*, 1986, courtesy, URTNA)

This introduction is presented with the sound of music at a soft and fading tone at the background, and it helps in preventing listener's misconception. A signature tune in radio drama is like the cover of a well-loved book which is instantly recognizable and immediately offers the promise of something enjoyable. Whether a well-known traditional or popular melody is used or a new piece is created, theme music should be appropriate to the culture of the audience. Signature music like what obtains in *The Step Mother*, is short, typically lasting about ten seconds at the opening and no more than five seconds at the end of each episode (in this case it takes four

seconds). If music is written especially for the serial, however, it should be a piece for at least five minutes duration. This allows for “fill in” music if an episode runs a little short and for the use of different segments of the theme music as bridge music. Bridge music is used to mark the transition from one scene to another. In a good serial, music is used sparingly; the transition from one scene to the next is done through dialogue. A good example of this is the transition from the court room to Moses’s home in Epie Ngome’s *The First Defence*.

Immediately after the bridge music at the beginning of *The Step Mother*, is a loud revving of the engine of a car accompanied by hooting and, later, the banging of the door of the car; then follows the sounds of footsteps on a cemented floor. The first voice we hear is that of Mr. Bayema, the general manager, who has returned from work exhausted. Without the use of sound effect, this introduction and the opening scene of *The Step Mother* would be dull and musty. Music, as in this scene, is a sound category that provides resonance to a scene in a play. It may also facilitate the identification of a character, like the soloist at the chief’s palace in Mumba’s *Koffi the Village Doctor*. Music also tends to create a sense of unity in the play as it interacts with human speech. Very generally, the rhythm and tempo of music provides an underlying foundation to dialogue.

In his ground-breaking book on radio drama, *Writing for Radio* (1998), Shaun Macloughlin has pointedly underscored the relevance of sound in the sub-genre by stating that “Radio drama has a magnificent past and hopefully a bright future in the form of perhaps not of radio, but of sound” (19). What Macloughlin, like MacNeice and Macville, means is that without sound one would not talk of radio drama. It is the sound effect that conjures the images that the mind’s eyes see in the course of listening to a radio play. It is the sound that attracts the listener at the beginning of a play, and no matter how trivial a play may appear in subject matter and form, one would want to listen to it. Nora Elu Mumba’s *Koffi the Village Doctor* addresses an issue that is crucial, though on the surface level it is not. The homecoming of a village celebrity from studies in the United

Kingdom in itself does not catch attention. But the manner in which the producer employs sound effect makes the audience want to listen to a play that tends to play a profound developmental role in their collective and individual lives. The uncoordinated chants that attain a cacophonous proportion, grip the listener who is likely to pay attention to the play.

A good approach in radio drama therefore, is identifying any unusual sound through prior dialogue to prevent listeners' misconception of the issues being raised. Take for example, the roaring of the Menchum Fall in *Nanun the Village Doctor*, produced by Radio Hot Cocoa (A local FM radio in Bamenda), sounds like an internal combustion engine at a constant speed. One would sympathise with a poor radio audience who visualises a couple chatting in the cabin of a speeding truck only to be surprised that the couple is actually at the foot of the Menchum falls.

Like the use of dialogue, sound effect requires tact and precision in the context in which it is employed. Ill-timed and disorderly sound effect results in senseless cacophony and hubbub, and the production suffers as the listener loses interest and is likely to switch off. This is a case of a senseless cacophony, and it is what mars Mumba's *Koffi the Village Doctor* where the play opens with a song that is accompanied by background deafening noise. The village women chant:

Kofi kofi kofi kofi kofi
Kofi dekaaa...
Kofi Kofi Kofi Kofi Kofi
Kofi Decaaa...
I want to see my loving child
My loving child that is soon coming...
Kofi Kofi Kofi Kofi kofi
Kofi Decaaaa...
Kofi Kofi Kofi Kofi Kofi
Kofi Decaaaa....

The joyful ecstasy produced by Koffi's imminent arrival has put the women in frenzy. This song, together with the ululations from the larger crowd portrays the festive mood and lends credence to the importance of the event in the community. However, the attempt at putting all the background noise that would be heard in a real life situation is detrimental to the quality of the production. The song is used merely to mark intervals, while the ululation is only for the background. This cacophonous atmosphere succinctly suggests the mood of the scene. The effective employment of the sound of the car stopping and a bell ringing at Koffi's arrival, matches adequately with the action in context. This is the same with the arrival of Koffi and the happy delegation that receives him at the chief's palace where the chief is greeted with the clapping of hands punctuated with affirmation of their loyalty to the crown.

If the merry-making in Mumba's *Koffi the Village Doctor* is occasioned by the pride of having a son of the soil return from 'where learning comes to an end', that in Epie Ngome's *Not Yet the Name* is occasioned by the visit of a political baron to his constituency. The former grounds ordinary folks' activities. The expectations are that after his homecoming, Koffi would eventually settle in the city to serve the inhabitants. The people of the village learn of something new: Koffi has to settle amongst them, and serve in a would-be Rural Health Facility. This positive twist in favour of the villagers contrasts sharply with the sexual promiscuity being spearheaded by a politician in his local constituency in Ngome's *Not Yet the Name*. At the end of the former, the hope for a better standard of health care shimmers, while with the latter the future is rather compromised as his Excellency Ndutu prefers to pay as much money as possible to destroy evidence of his guilt. The fine strokes of sound at the background in *Koffi the Village Doctor* match the expectations and hope, while that of *Not Yet the Name* reflect the emptiness of the acclaimed persons of integrity.

In spite of the established cultural diversification of Africa, there are common values that cut across the board on the continent. A cockcrow in Africa is never perceived as an ordinary routine

associated with cocks. A cockcrow would indicate time in context. It is at the “second cockcrow” (assumed to be about 4:00 am) that Ewanga gets out of bed to start cooking for the august delegation in the village in Epie Ngome’s *Not Yet the Name*. If the cockcrow signifies time here, it does not play the same role in Mulewa’s *The Step Mother*. Before Joseph’s arrival at his uncle’s residence, a cock had repeatedly crowed at Gideon’s door. He had asked a rhetorical question in line with who the upcoming guest to his home would be. In the same vein a hooting owl is a sign of ill omen. Though Epie Ngome’s *The first Defence* has an open-ended ending, one can only see the death of Mrs. Ndome Ebango, given that as Moses and his foster mother leave her in the hospital, their footsteps are accompanied by the hooting of an owl at dusk.

Silence and Setting

Although we have discussed the radio as a sound medium, the absence of sound is also heard and can attain cacophonous proportion. Wendell (1986, 16) has described silence as “a dramatic element that can be very loud.” It is therefore relevant to consider silence (sound’s ‘other’) as a meaningful dramatic element, especially in radio theatre where it tends to be total - unlike in traditional theatre where silence is visually filled. Broadly speaking, silence in Radio Theatre has both positive and negative aspects. Silence’s negative function signifies that for the moment nothing is happening on the medium, a void, what producers and/or broadcasters refer to as ‘dead air’. On the positive function of silence, it signifies that there is an on-going action which for one reason or another cannot be expressed in noise/sound. Like sound, therefore, silence makes meaning in the development of the play in a context established by word or dialogue that comes before or after it. In Radio Drama, silence creates a crucial lacuna that needs to be well managed to attain its goals. This vacancy can dramatise suspense, surprise or anguish at a terrific pace and then unleash an emotional outburst or laughter. It

can also conveniently drive home a mood of loss, meaninglessness, hopelessness or frustration.

The silence that envelopes George in Ndivé's *The Marriage that Never Was* when the principal of his college breaks the news about the termination of his scholarship points to a mood of complete frustration which contrasts sharply with the hilarious mood that the news of the scholarship award brings while George is still in Cameroon. In the latter, George opens the letter and exclaims. As the mother waits impatiently to get informed about its content, George pauses for about four seconds. Before he speaks, the mood of joy is already so obvious and palpable, a mood enhanced by a corresponding background music. In a similar manner, the silence that reigns at the airport scenario on the arrival of George and Ms. Harrison expresses the sense of betrayal that reigns in George's family and the family of his fiancé, Florence. It contrasts sharply with the enthusiasm that characterised the departure of the two families to the airport to receive George. In the same vein, the silence that envelopes Moses and Mrs. Ebango when the latter realises that Moses, her lawyer, is her son (whom she had abandoned at a market place twenty five years before) is heavily loaded with a mixture of surprise and an explosion of emotions with a terrific undertone. Mrs Ebango is faced with an excruciating joyfulness at the crossroads of laughter and tears.

On the other hand, in Mulewa's *The Step mother*, Joseph's silence after the father tells him of his decision to get married to another lady sends home a mood of reflection on the implication of such a decision to him and his future. The silence that precedes his reaction prepares the 'stage' for the surprise that the father betrays in his own reaction to it. Moses, to the utmost surprise of his father, renounces the father's decision to re-marry. In such a context silence assumes an equally important effect towards defining the mood of the characters.

In the same manner, and this time in the world of Victor Musinga's *Fantastic Madam Ida*, pause establishes mood in a very meaningful manner. When Koboko comes back home after one of his successful business trips he raises the question of Ida's inability to

conceive. When Ida offers quick rebuttal in anticipation of Koboko's immediate assault on her, Koboko rather gives room for silence that takes about five seconds and says in a matter-of-fact tone that Ida should better make meaning out of their union. Here the silence expresses disillusionment in a man who is wealthy, but sees himself as handicapped by the inability to procreate. Musinga also uses silence to good effect when Ida feigns joy for making a baby at long last. Before the party that has been organised in honour of the newborn baby begins, Ida has an exchange with one of the guests. The guest asks to know how old the baby is and when the next baby should be coming. Ida manages a wan smile, pauses and then says when God will make it possible.

Like in any piece of literature, identifying the historical and geographical setting of a radio drama production is fundamental to its appreciation. In radio drama discourse the word "setting" refers both to time and place, the latter considered in a more micro manner than would obtain in mainstream literary discourse. The radio audience has a better chance of imagining itself as part of the action if they know both when and where the action is occurring. Time can refer to the hour, day, month, season, year, or even to an era of history. Establishing the hour or the day is relatively easy on radio, since a character can make a passing reference to the time in the course of normal conversation. A character might say, for instance, "Good morning, Moses.... it looks as if it will be a rainy day, judging by that nimbus cloud." Some other examples might be: "Hello, Mary. Did you have a good Graduation Party?" or "So ends another week. Man, thank God it is market day."

When dramas are set in rural areas, sound effects can also help to establish the time. The natural sounds of insects and birds mark day and night. The sound of a rooster crowing, for example, is a universal signal of early morning, while in some areas the sounds of crickets or other insects indicate evening. In some parts of the world, church or temple bells or the sounds of prayer can be clear indicators of the time of day. Seasons can be suggested by passing references to the weather, crops, festivals, holy days, or school vacations. Sound effects

and seasonal music also can help establish the time of year. In most radio scripts, it is not necessary or even wise to establish the seasonal time too precisely unless it is of immediate relevance to the script. Once a script has indicated a precise time, the writer must be careful to remain faithful to that time in the remainder of the episode and perhaps in future episodes as well.

Therefore, establishing a radio drama setting is often more important than establishing the time. This is not to say that identifying the time of the action is not important. Because radio is not a visual medium, it may be tempting to think that graphic details of a scene's location are of no great importance. As a matter of fact, the contrary is true. If an audience is to believe in a production as an expression of real life, it must be able to visualize clearly the surroundings in which the characters live and work. Successful productions create settings familiar to the audience or made so. A rural audience, for example, generally would be more comfortable with a drama set in a small village than one set in a big city business office. An unfamiliar setting, however, can be exciting and add interest to the story as long as the writer provides enough details to enable the audience to imagine it clearly. In addition, a good setting should be suitable to the message. Writers should choose locations that allow the message to be presented in a natural manner. Limiting a serial production's setting to a home, for example, would not permit the drama to cover the content of a primary health care opportunity (as obtains in *Koffi the Village Doctor*) either appropriately or adequately. It would be essential to include a clinic or health post as one of the settings. Still, Listeners feel more comfortable if they are taken to the same familiar settings on a regular basis rather than moved from one new location to another frequently. Just as in real life, listeners may enjoy visits to exotic places, but they want to return to those familiar places in which they feel most comfortable. Moreover, it is easier for listeners to recognize where a scene is taking place if each plot has an established, standard setting. The standard setting for the main plot of a rural drama, for example, might be the dining room in a family home, while one of the sub-plots is routinely

set in a farm yard and another in a local joint. Any of the plots occasionally could move to a different location if the story requires it, but relying on standard settings simplifies writing and makes the story coherent and believable to the audience.

Each standard setting can have some brief sound identifying it, so that listeners can recognize the location immediately without lengthy explanations in the dialogue or by a narrator. The sound of utensils being moved around and the crackling of a fire might identify a dining room, for example, while the sounds of animals might identify a farm yard, and the sounds of automobile engines, horns, and tools being dropped on the ground might identify a garage. The identifying sound effect can be used at the beginning of a scene to establish the setting, held under softly through the opening lines of dialogue, and then faded out. Sound effects can be made live in the studio (by dropping tools, for example), or they can be pre-recorded (animal and automobile noises, for example).

Nevertheless, maintaining real time in a serial drama in particular has two meanings, the first referring to the passage of time over the course of the entire serial and the second to the passage of time within an individual episode. The writer should maintain a balanced time spread from the time the story starts to the time it ends. A common error when writers fail to prepare a full treatment in advance is to speed up the story towards the end of the serial, making extraordinary leaps in time between episodes. Far too many serials start out slowly, allowing, for example, four or five episodes to go by between the time a woman is taken to the hospital and the time she gives birth to her baby. Suddenly, about two-thirds of the way through the serial, the writer finds that time is running out and must leave gaps between one episode and the next in order to bring the story to its logical conclusion. This is careless writing and production that leaves listeners feeling that they have missed something or that the radio station has failed to broadcast all the episodes. The rule is that if the serial is to last a year, then the action within it also should last a year. There are exceptions to this maintenance of real time from the first to last episode, of course, but such exceptions must be

handled carefully and should occur infrequently. It is also important to maintain real time within an individual episode. Real time means that, within any particular scene or episode, the listeners have the sense that they are present for the whole of the story or that they are well aware of how and why additional time has passed.

Negotiating Development Strategies

It is fairly easy to see the central and often predominant role in Development initiatives played by myths, legends and other forms of storytelling in Africa, especially before the introduction of Western modes of education and writing. The assumption that full-scale adoption of market economy is the only path to development in the third world in general, where it is assumed there is no dynamic social change mechanism to transform it into modern industrialised states and ensure development, is moribund. Genres billed for entertainment address matters of profound interest and concern to the people who produce and consume them. These genres constitute the beginning point of grassroots mobilisation and empowerment. They constitute the starting point of a belief in self which is the primary vehicle of confidence. In other words, these genres pose questions about issues of livelihood and change. Radio Theatre enhances the preaching of such a necessary alternative by demonstrating it in a down-to-earth manner as in the productions we have been examining in this chapter. It initiates change in a more utilitarian manner by garnering and animating these folk traditions and cultures, thereby making available a fertile space for the control of innovations geared towards progress and development in different spheres.

Mottram (1952, 122) opines that a slum mentality is to be found in slums and that what we receive is expressed by nature. An artist in a slum, he goes on, would therefore possess a certain quota of slum mentality which is in turn reflected in his/her work of art. Besides the tremendous influence exerted on the artist as a human being, the milieu gives him/her the experience of life and its facet which is in

turn expressed in his/her work. Lawrenson and Swinglewood (1972, 10) hold that writers possess the talent and insight needed to express the various aspects of life in the society. Such talents come with the required integrity to provide a critique on societal values and ideology. With the deeper understanding of the society as a structured social system, Lawrenson and Swinglewood argue that writers can transcend their own position. Therefore, the form, content and profundity of a work of art constitute a reflection of the artist's ability to dissect his society. Such a potential is coming from the artist and his/her society; that is if he is talented, the talent is by extension that of his generation and community. To this effect, Greenblatt, (2007, 94) states that the more an artist digs into the fabrics of his/her society, the more he/she has penetrated into the talents of his/her age. Therefore, an artist has the potential to articulate the state of the entire nation or a whole generation, pinpointing the challenges and laying bare the limitations of that nation or society. This is what gives the artist the potential to create that imaginary community (Anderson, 2006) as he rallies around him/her the sympathies of the entire generation and/or the entire nation.

The consequence of this is that the writer's talents are nurtured in and by the society in which he/she grows. By extension we may argue that only the medieval era would have produced Geoffrey Chaucer's *The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*. Under no circumstances would Chaucer have written the poetry of T.S Elliott, and Nigeria's Chinua Achebe would never have written the novels of Thomas Hardy. This explains why despite palpable peculiarities in art as a whole, African literature is different from European or American literature.

Given this enormous influence on the writer/producer by his/her society, we find the appreciation of a work of art in isolation from its author as fundamentally flawed. We think that appreciating these radio play productions through the prism of new historicists will give a more profound insight to their relevance as an alternative to Development Theatre.

South Africa's DramAide: Nora Elu Mumba on Community Health

Before being produced by the BBC, *Koffee the Village Doctor*, a play written and produced by the DramaAid project in South Africa in the early eighties had been adapted by the Radio Deutschwelle training workshop in 1986 during one of its training workshops. Participants at the workshop came from five African countries, Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Botswana. The re-naming of characters in the play is suggestive of this multinational background of workshop participants. If the low level of health care remains an issue in Africa as a whole, it is more so in South Africa that has the highest level of HIV Aids infection in the continent²⁴. Because of South Africa's unique situation and because of the relevance of the historical background of a work of art as stated by Greenblatt (2007), we will pay attention to the country in substantiating the implications of the AID pandemic and its effects; more importantly, we will take a look at efforts that have been made through radio drama to address the growing pandemic. We do this in cognisance of the fact that the health of the population, especially the working age-group of that population, is a primary determinant of development in the community. This, perhaps, explains why the outbreak of epidemics or pandemics in most parts of the developing world is almost always preceded by a fall in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and hence the living standard in the affected country. Hanifah Namuleme (2007, 2)²⁵ chronicles the case of HIV-AIDS in South Africa:

It has often been assumed worldwide that the HIV/AIDS rate is highest amongst the poor and the uneducated. "We are on the eve of a very scary reality unless we start making some changes," said Tracy

²⁴ According to Louise Bourgault (1991, 10) South Africa's rank in the human development index in 1995 was 101. The country's health budget for health services stood at \$63.9 billion. Expenditures devoted just for the fight against AIDS were pegged \$9.6 million.

²⁵ An investigative reporter with SomaliNet News, see <http://somalinet.com/news/world/Africa/7071>

Hammond, one of the researchers. “This time it is not the employees, it is the employers. It is not the people without bank accounts; it is the people who make investments. If we thought the AIDS epidemic was having bad economic effects already, this could take us to the crisis point,” Hammond added. Though it is Africa’s greatest economy, South Africa is performing badly when it comes to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the effect is very evident on the economy.

It is from this context that the relevance of Mumba’s *Koffi the Village Doctor* to development would be appreciated. The production links Radio Theatre to primary health care and suggests a system of decentralisation in the health sector of the community. In *Koffi the Village Doctor* the villagers are bewildered to hear from no other person but Koffi himself that he has to settle and practice in their midst. This community is impoverished, the bulk of the population consisting of subsistence farmers. As Koffi settles in the village, there is a dramatic improvement in the area of health, hence a healthy space for development.

A series was written and produced by the South African broadcasting Corporation in the early eighties under a project known as DramAide. DramAide would later have an important impact on the fight against HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The project began as a rural project in the rural part of Kwa-Zululand. It used teachers and school nurses to produce a response to the then emerging AIDS epidemic. DramAide’s vehicle for delivering information about HIV and AIDS was and remains “Drama in Action.” Funded by the South African government, DramAide’s approach encourages junior high school pupils to develop skills in drama, and to use such skills in analysing their own situation vis-a-vis the risk of AIDS through the scripting of plays, most of which are produced as radio plays. (Bourgault, 2001).

The employment of theatre for social change in this manner has been chronicled in recent years by Freire and Boal. The latter, a dramaturge, has experimented in his native Brazil, the United States and some parts of Europe. These Development Theatre theoreticians

are new historicists in that they take local history very seriously; they consider the relevance of the author and his/her background in the appreciation of art. Inspired by these theorists, DramaAid went beyond the mainstream Development Theatre mode to seek other ways of rendering literature functional in a society plagued by HIV-AIDS. At the level of mainstream Development Theatre, DramaAide teams consisting of trained drama facilitators and nurses/primary health care workers visit schools and present AIDS information in the form of a play. After viewing the plays, the children would be asked to develop their own AIDS dramas drawing extensively from traditional forms of Zulu entertainment. DramaAide team leaders would visit the schools on a regular basis to help the children with their scripts. They would also give lessons on drama while exploring crucial questions about AIDS. The students would then present their plays to the general public during public events. They would adapt some of the plays for radio. According to Bourgault (2001), the broadcast of these plays on South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) resulted to the emulation of similar practices in other parts of South Africa, especially in the rural areas.

The creation of DramaAide in South Africa marked a significant beginning for the fight against HIV/AIDS and poverty. Nevertheless, the outfit cannot be divorced from its larger historical context in which it existed at the time. The separate government of South Africa at the time allotted fewer resources to the health of the black communities in the country and much fewer still to education and the promotion of arts. DramaAide faced difficulties because of this, but still did not relent in what would become a national emergency a decade or after. DramaAide had effectively used interactive drama in both the conventional way and via radio in the fight against AIDS in South Africa as stated by Bourgault (2001, 14):

AIDS awareness plays had been brought into 772 schools in South Africa by 1992. A further 500,000 had been reached through the project's open days and other projects. This took place in three of South Africa's provinces: KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng, and Eastern Cape Province. Several other provinces remained underserved. The

DramaAide project underwent twists and turns during the second half of the nineties. In 1996 the project became a national one, and in keeping with its responsiveness to the changing contours of the AIDS epidemic, DramaAide instituted two new programs - Act Alive and Go Grow. Act Alive focussed on imparting sex education and life skills to high school students by working more closely with both high school teachers and students in health promoting theatre for social change. And in 1997, DramaAide began to focus through its Circle Time on Primary School Education... In 1997 DramaAide joined a consortium of six groups to deliver national AIDS campaign through radio dramas. The consortium and indeed the government Department of Health and the NACOSA had recognised that the South African Public by and large was aware of the risks of AIDS and the modes of its transmission. It was agreed that what was needed was a battery of interventions designed to change not just information, but attitudes and behaviour, and the media would be at the forefront of this endeavour.... In the new millennium DramaAide has continued its health promotion drama work in schools, training teachers in life skills, and helping pupils to create health promotion clubs, and radio has remained a very useful medium for most of its projects.

This is the background within which we may appreciate Mumba's version of BBC-produced *Koffee the Village Doctor*. For the first time in the history of this imaginary African village a medical doctor has decided to settle in the village to practice medicine in a setting where the traditional medicine man has been the only practitioner. The presence of a medical practitioner in this imaginary enclave would be a huge compliment to the activities of DramaAide. On a broader perspective, *Koffi the Village Doctor* is created from the ashes of the Kamiriithu²⁶ Cultural Centre that was demolished on instructions

²⁶ The experimentation with the Kamiriithu popular theatre has become widely recognized as a significant phase in the development of popular theatre in Africa. It represents a symbolic phase in the evolution of Theatre for Development in Africa. Its impact is best measured through an understanding of its use as a means in the search for cultural action for freedom. The success of the initiative is seen in its all-

from David Arab Moi's government in Kenya. The operation of both traditional medicine (represented by Okonkwo) and modern medicine (represented by Koffi) ushers in a healthier Kenyan community that would easily restore the lost humanity and strengthen belief in itself, and the resolve to curb the growing spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is an achievement that can not be underestimated.

Changing Social Construct: Ndiva and Mulewa

One of the oversights of the old school in development strategy is that African countries lacked any dynamic social change mechanism that could transform them into modern industrialised states. Thus, informed by a capitalist culture, the school sought to destroy the 'primitive' cultures and replace them with 'modern' values. It is this existing economic and social basis of cultural relationships in the African setting that the productions of Ndiva's and Mulewa's plays explore.

Becky Ndiva's imaginary Cameroonian setting grapples with the changes that are gripping African families due to association with foreign values through movement to the west and personal predilection for western gadgets. Ndiva is more interested in the effect of such tendencies to family life and the community at large. She illustrates the frustration associated with this in *The Marriage that Never Was*. The family in the African context is considered the life-wire of the community. The frustration that envelops the family of a would-be wife to George, Florence, when George returns from the United States with an American fiancé would have a far-reaching repercussion on the community as a whole.

If Ndiva's *The Marriage that Never was* paints the picture of a society that struggles in vain to check the influx of a powerful foreign

inclusive approach, an approach that brought together people of all age groups, both sexes, and all social groups to identify common problems and sought common solutions to such problems.

current that is already part and parcel of the prevailing dispensation, Mulewa's *The Step Mother* pays attention to a strictly domestic crisis provoked by the absence of a motherly figure at home. For seven years Mr. Bayema has lived as a widower and would like to re-marry against his son's wish. Joseph finds it difficult to recognise Judith as a "mother", and prefers to abandon home for the city. Joseph's departure haunts Mr. Bayema, and renders him unproductive at his job.

Unveiling Moral Decadence: Musinga and Ngome

Leighninger and Popple, (1996, 330) assert that moral decadence is a function of the environment. They argue that the society renders the environment conducive for immorality to excel through such factors as physical deterioration, economic segregation, racial and ethnic segregation, a high incidence of social ills, such as infant mortality, mental illness, unemployment, divorce and desertion, and a high rate of dropping out of school. The characters that people the productions of the plays of Musinga and Ngome are either victims or architects of the labyrinthine social order neatly described by Leighninger and Popple. Such a chaotic setting impairs progress and development thereby offering itself as a critical source of inquiry to the development theatre expert.

Victor Elame Musinga who has been described by Stephen Arnold (1982, 53), as "Cameroon's most popular playwright", founded and directed the Musinga Drama Group, the first theatre company in Anglophone Cameroon. *Incredible Madam Ida* is one of Musinga's most celebrated plays because of its focus on youthful delinquency and its repercussion to a society that is already at the brink of collapse. The root cause of the crisis in Koboko's marriage is linked to Ida's excesses during her teens. Here the production dramatises the ripple effect of a morally corrupt youth to the society. The crack in the marriage is a symbol of the disunity that tears the society apart and renders cohesive action for progress difficult. The play, Musinga says, was inspired by a true life story involving his

childhood friend. The instability orchestrated by the inability of Ida to bring forth a child is a recurrent tendency in contemporary Cameroonian society in particular and Africa in general. Barrenness on the part of women remains a social stigma in the eyes of the society. This explains why Ida goes the extra mile of secretly adopting the baby of a teen age girl who herself is a victim of unwanted pregnancy.

Victor Epie Ngome is a regular contributor for the BBC radio drama competition and has won two prizes for his creativity in the discipline. He draws his inspiration essentially from his experiences. It was while serving in Douala (Cameroon's economic capital) as a broadcaster with the public radio in the late nineteen seventies that he got the experience that inspired him to write his celebrated *The first Defence*. Three elements of the police force met him in his office one afternoon with a three-week old baby that had been abandoned near a garbage heap, asking him to announce that if the parents did not come and get it they would hand the baby to any volunteer foster parents. Similarly, as a roving reporter with the national station of radio Cameroon in the early nineteen eighties, he would be part of the delegation of senior politicians who went on routine tours of their constituencies. It was during the coverage of one of such visits that he came face-to face with the undercover activities of men of integrity. This is where he got the inspiration for *Not Yet the Name*.

Like Musinga's *Madam Ida*, Both *The First Defence* and *Not Yet the Name* are inquiries into the moral health of the community that caught the attention of Leighninger and Popple (1996, 330). The productions unveil a setting that is degenerating into a moral puddle, thereby facilitating the task of the development theatre expert who wants to inspire the people to THINK (and not feel) about this and participate in carving out a new dispensation for their community in the manner expounded by Brecht, corroborated by Freire and Boal and neatly highlighted by Greenblatt (2007) in his discourse on the relevance of new historicism as a viable approach to analysing a literary work.

People-oriented Development by Radio: The Case of Malawi.

Today Malawi, like many countries in Africa is poor; in fact Malawi is among the poorest countries in the world (Manyozo, 2005). Because print media and television are economically and linguistically inaccessible to most people in Malawi, especially in rural areas, the responsibility of empowering and challenging people to participate in matters concerning their livelihood depends on radio, which according to Gomez (1975) is much more extensive, available, flexible, personal, readily understood, portable, speedy and efficient media. Mackie (1971) states that Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) radio served as a communication tool in agricultural and rural development given the numerous logistical, financial, staffing and transportation problems faced by the ministry of Natural Resources. Citing the introduction of the farmers' forum listening group in 1966, Mackie (1971, 106) avers that the use of radio proved to be a cost-effective and proper rural development communication strategy in increasing farmers' knowledge gain and contact between farmers and agricultural service providers.

According to Manyozo (2005, 4), the project focuses on two approaches of Radio-listening Clubs (RLCs)²⁷ organised by the Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) of the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) and Dzimwe Community Radio (DCR). After a one-day briefing sessions on how to conduct service meetings, coordinators were selected and given guide books that would

²⁷ Radio Listeners' Club (RLC) is a community-based group organized by community members themselves. It uses radio programmes to facilitate development discourse within their own community. It consists of consciously elected members of the organizing committee and voluntary members of the committee. It operates on democratic principles where membership is open to anyone in the community regardless of religious leanings, social status, sex, age, political affiliation or tribe. Each RLC has about twelve members, consisting of a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and ordinary members. The RLCs operate on guidelines, which are basically principles on how to conduct discussions, manage the groups and coordinate with other locally based development groups (Manyozo, 2005, 6).

facilitate their tasks. The format of the MBC radio forum programme had four parts, viz. The first ten minutes provided agricultural information and advice for the following week; the next five minutes featured field reports like interview with successful farmers and news of ongoing activities by listening groups; then followed three minutes of short informational features like, why buy fertilizer, why keep cattle, why spray cotton; and the final two minutes in which the radio teacher summarised the week's recommended practices (Kayanula and Lijenda, 2000). Immediately after the twenty-minute broadcasts, there followed a discussion and technical demonstration facilitated by the local coordinators.

The project generated interest from more farmers in the rural areas and led to a dramatic increase in the number of farmers' listening groups as gleaned from the fact that two months after the first forum broadcasts, more than one hundred groups were meeting weekly in schools, government buildings and under trees (Mackie, 1973, 112). Taking part in the forum project raised the morale of some extension experts in remote areas. They then felt connected to their colleagues and the communication programme. Kayanula and Lijenda (2000) state that this resulted in an increase in the time allotted to agricultural programming from less than one hour a week to about four hours per week. This is the background to the implementation of Rural Listeners Clubs (RLC) that has become one of the priority projects for the Ministry of Agriculture's Agriculture Communication Branch (ACB). Over the years the ministry has focused on the same farm radio approach to sensitise and mobilise farmers in the rural areas of Malawi.

The creation of the Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) within Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) has been very gainful to the goals of development communication. Sisya (2003, 3) informs us that DBU was established in 1999 to work with the station's Programmes Department in effectively engaging in Development Programming via participatory communication practices, to promote national dialogue around development issues. The creation of this unit constituted part of a broader process of

decentralisation. The unit had as its defined objectives to engage in participatory broadcasting through empowering rural communities, promoting dialogues, training of communities in radio production skills and conducting advocacy on development policy and issues as a way of ensuring productive national and social dialogue on and about development (Manyozo, 2005).

In paying attention to the empowerment of communities to define themselves and their understanding of their immediate realities via radio, the MBC's Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) engineers development on the air. This largely concurs with what Rodriguez (2001) calls giving Citizens' Radio its full potential as radio becomes a tool for triggering the dialectical and dialogical challenge of civil rights and citizenship among the many rural, illiterate and poverty-stricken people who have very limited and sometimes no access to electricity, telephones or internet. It is worth stating that, like other public radio networks in Africa, like Cameroon's Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation (CRTV), Nigeria's Nigerian Broadcasting corporation (NBC), Kenya's Voice of Kenya (VOK), Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) generally has a top-down information approach wherein information flows from the government to the citizen with very little room for alternative points of view and little dialogue with dissenting voices. The grassroots radio projects are therefore salutary ventures as they offer opportunities for community-oriented programmes to be brought to the fore, an exercise that promotes a participatory needs-based approach to interactions that corroborate democratic values. The process invariably establishes a strong and very energetic civil society.

It was never a co-incidence that the establishment of the Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) came at the same time with MBC's first Radio Listeners' Club's (RLC's) civic education campaign for social change project "Ndizathuzomwe" (these things are ours). Sponsored by the British Government Department for International Development for its first phase ending in 2002, "Ndizathuzomwe" project sets out to develop the lives of people in Malawi by giving them an opportunity to discuss issues pertaining to development on

radio (Kayanula, 2000). One of its first offspring was “Kanthu n’khama”, a thirty-minute magazine radio programme broadcast every Saturday afternoon from 2 O’clock on MBC Radio One and produced by the DBU at MBC. Manyozo (2005, 5) explains the context of this programme:

Initially falling under “Ndizathuzomwe project, “Kanthu N’khama” is a short form of a vernacular proverb, “Kanthu n’khama phwiti anakwatira njiwa” (hard work pays). Currently the Inter-ministerial Committee on Human Rights and Democracy (IMCHRD) supports the project with funds from United Nations Agency for International Development (UNDP). Through a DTR methodological approach of enabling ‘local communities to directly inform the programming they received’ the pilot phase of the project involved producing a radio series of twenty six episodes through RLCs. Kanthu n’khama tackles ‘developmental issues’ of food, security, health, gender, HIV/AIDS, education, water. Thus the unit’s location of its development discourse within poverty and social development highlights the influence of the early Los Banos School. The development discourse is carried out within a network of RLCs established across the country by DBU.

Interestingly, the DBU RLC idea was borrowed from Zimbabwe, where an association called the Federation of African Media Women, SADC (FAMW) had piloted a development initiative through radio (DTR) with a resounding success.

Today *Kanthu n’khama* itself is mainly produced by the RLCs who are already acquainted with basic production skills. They begin by identifying a development issue they want to address through an all-inclusive process in which different groups have the avenue to bring their contributions. This is then recorded and presented to a service provider of their choice. The problem statement is referred to as a village voice (Sisya, 2003). The village voice then outlines analysis of

the problem including the responsibility of the community and the existing gap the service provider is expected to fill. These are expressed via drama, traditional songs, poetry and discussions. Upon listening to the village voice, the service provider agrees with the committee for a possible dialogue, which takes place in the community itself. This dialogue is also recorded and facilitated by RLC members themselves, but sometimes the DBU facilitators assist in moderating it. At the end of the dialogue, the RLC must always ensure that an action plan has been developed, and responsibilities of both the RLC and the service provider are clearly outlined in the dialogue (Kayanula, 2000).

The RLC eventually forwards the village voice and the dialogue to the DBU producer who then fine-tunes and combines the segments for broadcasting as *Kanthu n'kehama* programme (Sisya, 2003). The producer is aided by a programme planning sheet, which provides a guide for the key message from each of the programmes that is ready for broadcasting. The DBU facilitators visit RLCs on a monthly basis at the minimum in order to assist them with the technical challenges met, dialogues made, short comings encountered and to provide them with general advice along the rights-based approach in development (Manyozo, 2005).

The DBU is in record for having empowered local communities to the point where they summon high state functionaries such as cabinet ministers to remote villages to come and account for their policies and services provided by their ministerial departments (Sisya, 2003). It is evident here that *Kanthu n'kehama* has noticeably succeeded to a huge extent in promoting a sense of ownership of the national airwaves as it tends to give communities the latitude to determine programme content through their chosen discourse. Significantly, enough, even the day and time of broadcast were decided by the communities. According to Manyozo (2005, 7) the format of *Kanthu n'kehama* programme itself consists of a five-minute review of the previous programme, followed by ten minutes of village voices raised by communities, drama excerpts performed by RLCs and then finally, fifteen minutes of action-oriented responses from service providers.

Prominent issues on the programme include water problems, income-generating activities, land problems, health services, bridges, insufficient primary school blocks, irrigation facilities, drinking water or food security (Kayanula, 2000). When it comes to community participation, the creation of RLCs and subsequent development dialogues within them show that there are some question signs over levels and the extent of different participations. Manyozo (2005, 7) attempts to identify some of the imbalances –

problems of gender imbalance, with women dominating RLCs, access to working radios, dominance by men in the dialogues and top-down approaches of service providers who advise instead of dialoguing on development issues. Despite the fact that some clubs were established on already existing structures in villages, like farmers' clubs, there has been a feeling that the RLC establishment consultation was not adequate. Participation, however, is an open-ended process of bargaining and negotiation, which involves lobbying, creating of rapport, partnerships and support networks. Worse still, the RLCs face hostilities from prospective service providers such as District Assemblies, Civil Service Organisations and other NGOs who usually do not appreciate listening to audio-tapes that articulate problems of a particular community as well as the idea of driving the communities for dialogues with the RLCs.

Furthermore, in establishing citizens' radio structures and processes, Castello (2005) highlights the need for consulting communities, establishing management committees, establishing a legal framework, as well as planning for training. The management of MBC and Dzimwe's RLCs overlooked satisfactory requirements for community consultation and mobilisation (Manyozo, 2005, 11). Theoretically and practically, citizen participation could be very subversive as it involves radical redistribution of power within socially, politically and economically marginalised communities.

There is the thinking that the people challenge the usefulness of new knowledge and technology which they see through their indigenous prism. They thus refuse to be co-opted into what looks to them like a ready-made development initiative – a project conceived, designed and conceptualised off-sight (Ansu-Kenneth, 1994, 101).

However, DBU's and Dzimwe's participatory radio programming through RLCs are by every standard forms of development broadcasting. *Kanthu n'khama* and DTR get their strength from the local people who pay attention to them. This sharply contrasts with centralised public radio reporting's lopsidedness. In Malawi radio, especially local or rural radio, is employed as a vehicle for the promotion of participatory dialogue on issues about local development. Radio broadcasting has enormously shaped discourses on development planning, implementation and evaluation at the local level.

From the aesthetics of radio play productions discussed earlier on in this chapter through efforts in South Africa at fighting HIV/AIDS via radio plays to the vibrant development broadcasting in Malawi, discussions, practice and issues are based on their social relevance; consequently, they affect the internal structures of the societies and therefore the behavioural patterns of the target group. As the target population consumes these products, it pushes them to stimulate debates about their hopes and fears. Such debates reanimate hitherto bottled-up frustrations; it liberates and strengthens them to cast out the sense of loss that has been lurking in their minds. The liberating effect is to be seen as profound, especially as the common man finds himself playing a key role in the dramatic enactments. The radio playwrights (Mulewa, Ndiva, Ngome, Mumba and Musinga) and their respective producers might not have targeted development projects as in South Africa and Malawi, but the enormous contribution they make on the air with their works in the area of stimulating such debates and triggering thought-provoking questions have tremendous impact on the population at the socio-psychic level. Theatre for Development takes these local cultures and traditions as a beginning point from which it outlines the development project that would

improve the life of the community. On this score, the radio play productions discussed in this chapter and the practical development broadcastings seen in South Africa and Malawi are development initiatives being initiated on the air. These productions render the audiences dramatic actors, then social actors. They are in a virtual theatre of conscientisation that corroborates Freire's pedagogy.

Freirian Thinking and Development Communication

Development Theatre has not made maximum use of the paradigms of Development Communication with actual engagement from all points of the communication process. There are profound benefits of active participatory engagement of target communities in decision-making processes; it triggers enthusiasm and motivation. There is plenty of literature that demonstrates the relevance of grassroots participation in informing and ensuring development strategies. Grassroots engagement empowers and speaks to salutary democratic values that shape the current world order. Development communication that welcomes considerable input from the target communities and that does not rely on an out-side expert remains ideal. This is a sort of transactional communication that is antithetical to the one-way (usually up-down) mode. It is not the unilateral communication process largely en vogue in post-independent Africa. This mode borders on a process whereby after interacting for a while, senders and receivers reach a stage of shared meaning through having genuine dialogue.

This concept is consonant with Friere's liberatory pedagogy that condemns the banking system of education in which knowledge or learning is a one-way persuasion process whereby the teacher knows all and is expected to give what he knows to the pupil. In this system, Freire posits, knowledge is seen as a stored gift or stock-piled asset to be distributed at will by those who own it to those who are considered needy and often destitute. Furthermore, the self-elected teacher decides on the programme content and the manner of dissemination while the perceived helpless and clueless student

whose opinion does not count is expected to adapt and participate in the process. The latter is, therefore, a mere object in the process. Antithetical to this is the dialogical or transactional format of communication of participatory or shared education, the teacher playing the role of a catalyst; he/she simply triggers the thinking process and takes part in it as a participant and not a master. It is a dialogue wherein both parties gain knowledge through shared exploration and experience. In Freire's thinking the teacher is not "the teacher" but "a student" amongst students; he is a partner with equal rank in the learning process willing to learn alongside his/her peers.

This Freirian paradigm seems to be the mode favoured by both the efforts in South Africa at fighting HIV/AIDS through radio plays to the vibrant development broadcasting in Malawi seen earlier on in this chapter. Perhaps more relevantly, it is akin to the practices of the Kamiriithu, Kumba and Botswana experiences (cf chapter one above). The target communities are expected to evolve freely and comfortably as they trade old, more familiar practices for new unfamiliar modes on the basis of recommendations from the out-side experts. Not surprisingly, this ends up as the renounced one-way persuasion method dismissed by Freire and emulated by the practitioners. It became difficult in the earlier discussed experiences for the participants in Kumba (Cameroon) and Zaria (Nigeria) to miss out on the over-weighing influence exerted by the experts who were not part of them in parameters that ranged from dressing codes through speech to perception. It was again the top-to-bottom or centre to periphery model of communication with very little and negligible input from the individuals within the respective communities, a one-way indoctrination process whereby the teacher arrogates to him/herself the status of a banker of knowledge to be transferred at his will to the needy and passively listening customer in a lopsided manner.

Even the articulated follow-up action does not address these shortcomings. Okagbu (1994, 30) has argued, in his case militantly, for the unusefulness of the follow-up action by stating that:

The fact that Theatre for Development projects in most instances use the diffusion of innovation model of communication, the follow-up simply becomes 'nothing more than a feedback for the outside experts, a device to make the external manipulation more effective' and not as a mechanism of making the intervention agencies more responsive to the needs of the community. The follow-ups just measure the responses of members of the target groups to the new idea or themes dealt with in the plays, assess the uptake of the development initiatives and ideas which the experts have brought in, and then fashion new plays that address areas where the first work seems not to have succeeded or in some cases, proceed to the next phase of the development scheme or strategy as already worked out by the centre or outside agencies. The members of the community have no input whatsoever, and are not in control even of the use to which their responses are going to be put. Looking at the plethora of Theatre for development in Africa, one really struggles to find any that in actual fact tries to get the members of the target communities to become genuine actors or participants in the theatre-making process. For some inexplicable reason, a majority of the Theatre for development programmes fall short of Boal who rightly argues that 'All truly revolutionary theatrical groups should transfer to the people the means of production in the theatre so that the people themselves may utilize them. The theatre is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it.

This follow-up move by the experts simply creates anxiety in the oppressed who had returned to their relative tranquillity after the fanfare of experimentation during practice. This experience underscores the shortcomings in mainstream Development Theatre and the relevance of Radio theatre in genuinely bringing the common man to the fold through the aesthetics exhaustively discussed in this

chapter. My reservation on the relevance of mainstream Development Theatre stems from the fact that it has consistently failed to realise that in order for real development to take roots, members of the target community need to cultivate a critical consciousness about themselves and their every-day immediate circumstances. This may effectively be attained via praxis and a conscientisation process in which these needy people of the communities are not perceived as recipients, but knowledgeable subjects capable of and actually achieving an in-depth understanding of both the socio-cultural realities that shape their ability to transform such realities. This has, for the most part, been absent in all the practices explored in this work this far. This truly all-inclusive theatre espoused by Freire and Boal has been paid lip service. We have not seen a truly transactional and liberatory theatre mode in which there is a practical participation all along the process; what has been recurrent is the laced information of the agit-prop style. On the other hand, radio theatre by its nature, aesthetics and general production process engages the audience from the beginning right to the end.

Thus, unlike the mode of Development Theatre that precedes project implementation and mainstream art theatre, radio drama does not necessitate the physical coming together of people. However, it serves very relevantly as an alternative approach to Development Theatre in spite of the difficult context that writers and producers in the African context find themselves in, namely: the lack of incentives and the stigma attached to the sub-genre by the proponents of 'belle lettres'. When people are engineered to discuss their problems and seek strategies of change by collective action, they are engaged in a theatrical exercise. They are involved in a theatre of struggle. Through this practice, the dispossessed would reclaim their voice in the manner suggested by Ross Kidd (1979, 268). Kidd opines that once engaged in this type of theatre, the people "see their work as recovering, reviving, validating and advancing the indigenous people's culture and history as part of the larger struggle for land, freedom from exploitation, control over their own institutions and lives, etc."

A radio play or development broadcasting would trigger or engineer discussions by the audience that almost always culminate with some form of awareness in that audience, awareness that is accompanied by a better understanding of its fears and hopes. Its multiplier effect on the community as a whole may not only be a regaining of waning confidence but an impetus for social action that should affect power relation.



*Malawi – Nkhotakota Community Radio Staffers
Courtesy: Farm Radio International*

Development Discourse in Selected Cameroon Anglophone Radio Plays

There has been no single concern as overriding in the preoccupations and concerns at the collective level of social life on the African continent as the question of development. It is evidently the single most obsessive issue for all governments and ruling elites on the continent. It is difficult to find a government in postcolonial Africa which has not paid more of its attention to development objectives. Perhaps more difficult is to explain why after half a century of the much proclaimed independence, it continues to be an enduring feature of the discourses and primary objectives of most African governments. There are no exceptions to this trend. The rhetoric of desired development is churned out at every given opportunity: from high-level state events through workshops or seminars to political campaign slogans. The amazing fact is that despite the copious verbiage and the related fanfare that goes with such almost always elite events, the pompous pronouncements of state authorities on development, and the usually predicted outcome of the endeavours, very little has been achieved that can be described as developmental. In explaining this anomaly, social scientists have advanced some explanations, many of which can be grouped into two main schools: modernism theory and dependency theory. Whereas the latter asserts that economic growth in the advanced capitalist countries created poverty in Africa in its wake, the former avers that deficiency in Africa as seen in the absence of capital, technology and initiative is the cause of massive and swelling poverty (Isbister, 2006).

Primarily, the neglect of indigenous cultural values and its spiralling effects on development formulae is to explain this bewildering phenomenon. In other words, culture is the missing link in development planning in Cameroon in particular and Africa in general, and Cameroon Anglophone Drama for Radio offers a

vibrant theatre for the oppressed to regain confidence in themselves and take control of their destiny. The extended philosophical undertones embedded in some of the selected plays under study demonstrate how weighty and useful they would be in re-animating local social and cultural values, in manners suggested by new historicists. In a more meaningful manner, the play-scripts provide a springboard for a development discourse in selected Cameroon Anglophone Plays for Radio as we pay close attention to the historical and geographical setting as a major springboard to appreciate the plays.

Indigenous Culture: A Missing Link in Development Initiatives

The concept of development essentially suggests an improvement of the quality of life; it indicates that the people are able to attain their potential, build and maintain self-confidence and manage to attain the level of reasonable accomplishment and dignity. Such a sustained socially engaged socio-structural transformation paradigm that augments the productive capacity and economic returns of the people has been largely absent in Africa. The blame has been levied on Development agencies which at the dawn of independence stressed the economic role of development in an average worker's income, the cost of living, levels of production and the gross domestic product. Pretty often beautiful residential areas, hotels, skyscrapers, Mercedes-Benzes or Lincoln-made cars in African cities were erroneously equated with evidence of development. Amazingly, such cavalier life-style invariably co-existed with shanty areas of the cities characterised by squalor and extreme poverty. This yardstick for development in Africa has failed because it lays emphasis on economic and technological approaches from the West. Such Western-oriented formulae were demonstrated further in such projects as The Green Revolution which was undertaken in the nineteen sixties and seventies with the intention of increasing the level of food production in African countries. According to World Bank economist, Fantu Cheru (1976, 29), the initiative failed woefully

as, in most cases, the experiments accelerated the rate of displacement and environmental degradation. It is a telling case of a development project implemented with western standards in mind that was unsuccessful because its initiators ignored indigenous cultural values. Largely informed by modern scientific knowledge with its link to wealth, power and prestige, this development theory both despised and ignored the indigenous people's own knowledge and perception of their environment. Priorities in crop, livestock and forestry research, for example, reflected biases against what mattered to the poor and often rural people. (Robert Chambers, 1993)

In associating theatre with development strategies, the contemporary perception of development measures development against the quality of life lived by the rural masses. The difference is intended to begin and be seen in the life of the masses; it should be seen as effecting a social transformation in every aspect of life lived by the masses. Solomon Sinusi (2004, 3) observes that "the striking feature about developing Asia is that the development and transformation of Asian societies are noticeable, first and foremost, at the village level." The significance of this observation is that in the transformation and modernisation of agrarian societies in Asia, the bottom line has been that, social change should transform the lives of the burgeoning rural masses, the audience, that is, whom Brecht (1964) advises should not be taken for granted. The mass society should be seen as intervening ingenuously on the environment in pursuit of its desired mode of livelihood because the foundation of a people's indigenous knowledge is germane to their social transformation. It is Freire (1970) who, perhaps influenced by Marx, argues that work and the manner in which people organise their labour are the obvious indices of development. In his viewpoint, having control is a pre-requisite for development. This concept is much more meaningful than the quest for dignity and economic comfort espoused by high-tech development experts. To Freire, the true indicators of development are determined by people's indication of their history that must occur in space and existential time (1972, 157). This enquiry is not exhaustive without praxis, a combination of

situations that does not provide the space for liberation. Underdevelopment is indicative of the lack of space for action which development theatre sets out to provide to the common man and which finds a fertile breeding ground in stories of the people told by them to themselves.

Ideally, this space is to be closely linked to the people's own values, not with an external model. As former World Bank expert Fantu Cheru (1976,16) puts it, "What is known in social science as underdevelopment is indeed development outside of culture." Here, Cheru is emphasising the necessity of an authentic culture, culture that draws from the strength of local reality and knowledge to inspire development. Crucial to this are factors such as art, education, language and social relationships. African Radio Drama production, as an art form, employs language to educate the people by exploring the intricate social relationships that constitute the cultural landscape which is the fertile ground for development initiatives. This fertile ground offers a Freirean avenue for 'conscientisation'.

For, in response to the colonial experience, Paolo Freire came up with a theory on the relevance of consciousness in education - an ideology of liberation that emphasises popular participation. This thinking is similar to traditional African education system which aimed at integrating learning with practice. Because education here is for both the student and the teacher, the participants develop a deeper perception of their history. This all-embracing process is developed through the means of dialogue which is the medium for the development of critical thinking that invariably leads to critical consciousness as the teacher and the student discuss their history, not as an irrelevant past, but as a formidable springboard for understanding the present conditions. It is a joint process in which the teacher and student, or the actor and spectator teach each other the usefulness of their history and environment. This provides a profitable avenue for perceiving the concept of progress and development.

Moreover, African societies, like other parts of the third world, are made up of teaming populations which have ancient collective memories and banks of knowledge about their environments which they use to implement their modes of livelihood. Such reservoirs of knowledge have deep and penetrating roots embedded in the cultures of the people. Developmental initiatives must draw from this repertoire to be useful. It needs to extract from this corpus and construct the new knowledge on what already exist. In this way new knowledge is integrated into the indigenous cultures of the people. Such new knowledge does not bypass or neglect the relevance of the old knowledge which the people already have. In acknowledging the old, the new is added on while respecting the cultural centrality of the indigenous for their confidence and ability to relate to the new. The old and a hybrid of the old and the new are obtained in the selected plays that were written for Radio in the nineteen seventies by, mostly, budding Anglophone Cameroonian playwrights. Most of these play-scripts were not produced. Drawing from the reservations expressed by the then station manager of radio Buea, Paul Kode, in response²⁸ to a request for an interview on the subject, one may argue that the organisers of the Guinness-Radio Buea contest themselves did not have adequate resources to do justice to the corpus that was submitted. However, the scripts demonstrate the dynamics of the peoples' involvement with their environment and how they perceive themselves. Apparently naïve and carefree, the stories treat commonplace themes in very simple and often sub-standard English. However, such simplicity that characterises both matter and manner in the scripts are not to be underestimated; for, pretty often they

²⁸ In an attempt to get the details about the Guinness-Radio Buea corpus, I made numerous attempts at having an interview with the then station manager of Radio Buea, and none was successful. He, however told me, in brief monosyllabic utterances on the high way that they were unable to select, edit and produce most of the plays due to the amount of scripts that came in. We think that it was more due to the lack of enough resources to make use of the corpus that trickled in. This shortcoming probably accounts for the relevance of the initiative by the radio Deutschswelle training programme that saw many Cameroonian radio play producers in attendance.

speaking incessantly of the anxieties and dangers of absolute power, greed, education, money and waged work, as well as of their joy, public corruption and private morality. While some of the play-scripts delve into the pre-colonial world, others explore the changes that the colonial encounter have necessitated and the efforts they are making to cope with the new reality.

Synopses of Selected Play-Scripts

How We did Our Things by Jerome Shey

In an imaginary setting in the grassland region of what became known as Cameroon there is a rush for a piece of land at Shah which is reputed to be the most fertile location in the village. Fai, the custodian of the land demands a fee of two jugs of wine and five cocks from any one among his subjects interested in cultivating any part of the land. Takong, famous for his relatively large-scale mixed-cropping, is given a considerable portion of the land at Shah, while Shavla who had provided smaller jugs of wine and five cocks is given a smaller piece of land at Shah. When Shavla protests the disproportionate offers, Fai explains that Takong is the higher bidder and has benefited from a corresponding larger piece of land. Meantime, it is time for the seasonal sacrifice of thanksgiving in the land. At Fai's palace the chief priest of the land, Shufai presides over the sacrifice. He strangles a hen with his hands and sprinkles its blood on the threshold of the shrine while calling on the gods of the land to bless the land and its inhabitants. The chief celebrant then pours six cups of wine on the sacred grove, serves the chief and invites all the participants to join the chief and him in feasting. Three days later the sudden disappearance of men and women while tilling the land at Shah causes a stir in the village. The first speculation is that the gods of the land are angry. The mysterious disappearance of men and women, including two queens, is the subject of the meeting that Fai summons all the elders of the land to hold at his palace. The counsellors are unanimous that there is a threat of extermination of the inhabitants of the land. After consulting his spider-god the

diviner warns that no body should go to Shah anymore until such a time as the gods of the land shall have been appeased. He predicts that a young boy would discover the source of the mishap. Fai brings the meeting to a close and calls on his counsellors to disseminate the diviner's advice. Tan, a young boy in the community reveals to Fai that he has mysteriously survived from drowning at the river Nweh during which an apparition of his mother, who had been among those to disappear at Shah, revealed to him the circumstances surrounding the Shah mystery. According to the revelation all those who have disappeared are in that river and the chief should immediately organise a sacrifice at the river in order to recover his lost subjects. Fai immediately summons another high-level meeting during which they prepare and carry out a sacrifice of atonement by taking to the river a life gorilla, food and assorted herbs. Peace and stability returns to the land.

In Peril of Ancestral Traditions by John Amuntum

Ngonjo lives with his father, Ta'alah and an invalid kid brother called Child. Ngonjo's mother had died as a result of her defiance of traditional ethics. Ta'alah tills the field alone while Ngonjo takes care of Child. They live a very meagre subsistence life. The leaders of the secret society in the land, Nforchu and Tande discuss the persistent threats to their authority by some 'recalcitrant' members of the clan who feel that "there can be two suns in the sky" (5). They pledge to do all it takes to maintain the traditions and customs of the land. While in the field Ta'alah is confronted by the "dreaded night juju." In escaping from the penalty that he would have to suffer if it identifies him, he falls and sustains an injury that he would eventually die of. Child would not stand the tragic death of their father and dies a few hours later. First Messenger and Second Messenger of the Secret Society bar Ngonjo from paying last respect to his father's and brother's remains as required. Ngonjo, they maintain, would do that only when he must have fulfilled the condition dictated by the custom of the land. He is asked to provide, among other items, goats and fowls. Ngonjo carries a strong word of protest to the chief's

palace where the chief intimates that he cannot bring calamity to the land by acting contrary to its tradition. He is taken into custody for overtly calling for the change of the status quo.

The Death of Chief Tadkon by Peter Fomundam

On hearing that the custodian of their land, chief Tadkon, has taken ill, men and women of the village gather at the palace. The women congregate in the house of the “Mafon” (queen mother) while the men gather in the palace living room. The chief traditional doctor in attendance to the chief reveals that the chief’s illness is serious and that he has been bewitched by one of the sub chiefs. When the traditional doctor in attendance to the chief invokes the spirit of the chief’s predecessor, the late chief Oneku’s spirit reveals that chief Tadkon’s spirit is hanging on the “children’s tree” near Widikum. To cure chief Tadkon, the doctors say one of them has to transform into a python so as to set the chief’s spirit free. As they deliberate on who would do this, the chief passes away. The remains are buried before the news is made public. A necromancer is consulted on the cause of the chief’s death. It is confirmed that one of the sub-chiefs bewitched the chief.

How Ngongila Married a Wife by R.M. Nguti

Ngimba and Nyankemasang recognise the need for their son Ngongila to get married. Husband and wife invite five family elders to address the issue. It is resolved that Nkongila is ripe for a wife. After deliberations, the sitting unanimously agrees that Mokaka’s daughter has come of age and that her hand should be asked on behalf of Ngongila. The ladies in attendance are charged with the responsibility of entering into negotiation with the Mokaka family. At the Mokaka homestead Mama Mbango and Mama Ngimba formally present the intention of their family. When the bride’s opinion is asked she says that she has no objection to the choice of her husband provided “papa and mama like it.” On hearing her opinion, her father Mokaka gives his consent, after which a marriage ceremony is arranged.

The Rescuer by Jude Shey

Mr. Lukong and his wife, Wirngo, recognise the need for their son to get married. After scorning each other with gibes on the question of who a would-be daughter-in-law should be, husband and wife agree on the daughter of Ngong, the distiller of the chief's palm wine. Three weeks later Lukong tells Tantan that they "are going to search for a grinding stone for him" (5). Father, mother and son set out for Ngong's homestead. Unable to decipher the aim of the journey, Tantan's curiosity sends Lukong reprimanding him for being too inquisitive on "matters that only elders understand better" (6). A jovial and amicable reception offered by Ngong and his family sets the stage for Lukong to make the request for Ntang's hand in marriage to his son Tantan. The request accompanies the presentation of a jug of palm wine and some kolanuts. On Ngong's request to know Tantan's potential, Lukong says that his son has "a large piece of land on which he cultivates varieties of crops, at his tender age of twenty three planting seasons he has killed three antelopes and a deer, and he has just completed a larger apartment of three huts" (7).

Ngong admits having got the request but would not decide on it as the opinion of a much more respected voice in the matter has to be heard. He refers Lukong to the bride's grand father, Shufai. At Shufai's homestead the family of the bride await their in-law for the wedding formalities to be effected. After a traditional rite that takes the groom's family into three different shrines amidst chants and praises the two families settle for merry-making that is punctuated by a question and answer session between Shufai and the bride's family. Shufai tells Shey to inform the bride that the young man sitting beside her brought the wine and is asking for her hands in marriage. If she is in the affirmative, she should drink of it. Ntang timidly and shyly pours the wine in to the pot, scoops some and serves the Shufai and the bride amidst applause. After the ritual Shufai declares Ntang, "their daughter" a wife to the "Lukong family." There is singing

dancing and merrymaking. Everybody leaves with joy and gladness for the success of the wedding.

The Death of Tangwe by John Tanto Tata

Tangwe falls ill under mysterious circumstances. He receives assistance from neighbours and family members. There is a growing speculation that his brother Bunji has caused his illness on account of a disagreement between them over a piece of land their late father had left. After a close attention on Tangwe by a corps of traditional medicine men Tangwa's deteriorating health situation becomes stable. The chief practitioner, Tangang informs Tangwe to reconcile with any member of his family with whom he had misunderstanding of any sort as this will make it possible for them to succeed in their endeavour. Talla sends word to all his family members to meet at his compound. The wife, Ginje, leaves for the farm on instructions from Tangang to bring particular herbs from where Tangwe used to till. While at the farm their only son, Tata comes wailing in tears to tell her that Tangwe has died. A special team of witch-doctors sent by the palace to investigate the cause of Tangwe's death reveals, after a public display of divination cowries on the floor of his shrine, that the deceased's brother, Bunji, is responsible for his death. The chief promises the 'murderer' retributive justice as a lesson to all perpetrators of such evil.

Poison in Chief Bahtum's Palace by John Ngong Kum

Chief Bahtum has unusually taken ill under suspicious circumstances that are rendered even volatile by threats of famine and an epidemic. There is a general fear of the unknown. The elders and notables in the village are pondering on the helplessness of man before the gods. The two soothsayers at the service of the chief repeat their vows to serve the land through the chief. They set out to investigate the cause of the chief's illness and their divinations reveal that the chief's first wife, Nahtum administered food poisoning to him. The revelation sends Nahtum fainting. The chief reveals that of all their children Nahtum has conceived only the first. Before dying

the chief calls on his subject to remain in peace and harmony. He pours blessings on his offspring and warns them to beware of women, for they have remained a perpetual threat to progress in the society. He names Kebeh his successor who is now Bahtum II and promises to be with him even after death. Nahtum eventually dies of severe hallucinations after confessing her crime and wishing all her children well. Haunted by the spectre of the dilemma as to whether to mourn his mother or not, Bahtum II says in a soliloquy: "We cannot fight against the gods. Their will prevails, and we are but instruments through which they do their will"

Madam Magrano by Victor Elame Musinga

Madam Magrano suspects that her husband's love for her is fading, and this is confirmed by rumours of her husband's secret love affair with a prostitute. On the advice of a neighbour, Bikum, she visits a traditional doctor to procure a charm with which to restore her husband's love. Ironically, the traditional doctor 'Bakaja' whom she visits, develops lust for her and intentionally gives her poison which she ignorantly employs in poisoning her husband to death. Realising her mistake, she secures Bakaja's confidence and immediately employs the same portion on him to avenge her husband's untimely death.

The Trials of Ngowo by Victor Elame Musinga

The play portrays the repercussions of an age-old tradition of marriage whereby aged men become engaged to baby girls soon after their birth, through an arrangement with the girls' parents. The latter keep receiving money and presents on their daughters' behalf from their prospective sons-in-law until the girls are of age to be married to their usually older husbands with or without their consents.

Ngowo, a young teenager, finds herself confronted with this predicament of customary marriage. She yields to it after hard struggle, but is determined to revolt somehow and have this custom of marriage abolished in Motombolombo village. The difficulties she

faces to have this custom abolished throw light on the paradoxes of this age-old tradition.

The End of Wealth by Victor Epie Ngome

Tome, a wealthy man in the village of Wokuma invites the eldest of his wives, Monjoa to discuss strategies of sustaining his wealth at the backdrop of threatening poverty in the village. The first phase of the project is to marry two more wives to strengthen the family labour force. Tome sends Monjoa to go in search of these wives-to-be. Tome's son Ngande reports that in his father's absence the "gornment man" came to inform him that everybody in the village should within three months put their animals under control, and that after the deadline any stray animal will be destroyed. Tome retorts with taunts to the government, saying that "gornment", now their own brother, should not do what the white man could not dare.

Tome's second son Njake comes in to relate a school demand for tuition that the school authorities say is overdue. Monjoa comes with the two potential wives each of whom she says are worth "five goats and two cows." Tome's worry about the impact of the government order sends him to the village chief who had himself been racking his mind over the repercussions of such an eventuality as mentioned by the administrative order.

While at the farm with his entire family Tome says he has seen a sign of bad omen and all is likely not to be well. His statement is followed almost immediately by sounds of wailing from a distance. As they all stand dumbfounded, their son Ngande comes to tell them that all their animals have been killed by the "gornment." Back at home the family is thrown into mourning. Tome regrets that he should be the one to bring an age-old line of a wealthy family to an end. He would not heed to the chief's advice that the carcasses should be buried at a public ceremony. He prefers to invoke the spirits of the god- "efassa-moto" to poor vengeance on the government. He commits suicide.

An Heir for Mr. Anubong by Ashu John

Mbe Anubong and his friend Mbe Agualabong taunt each other with gibes at their decrepitude. This preoccupying issue for the old in the village reminds Anubong of a soothsayer's prophecy that he would have only one child. He reflects on the trauma he will live if his expectant wife delivers a baby girl and not a boy. His friend Agualabong proposes another soothsayer, Fotabong whom he claims is the best in the village. Fotabong prophesies that Anubong's wife would deliver only a baby girl who shall in turn satisfy all his wishes.

Eight years later Anubong's daughter succeeds in an interview to go to a college and the father would not want her to go to school. He would eventually yield to pressure from his wife that their daughter, Agobin should go to college. When Agobin comes back home after a year in school pregnant Anubong sends away mother and daughter from home. Five months later Agobin gives birth to a baby boy that re-unites the family. Anubong becomes very excited and fulfilled in his longstanding worries of not having a male offspring to take care of his property after death.

Fantastic Madam Ida by Victor Elame Musinga

Madam Ida is unable to cement her marriage because she cannot have a baby after six years in it. All appears lost as her medical report attributes this defect to eighteen abortions she committed in her teen-age days. She hides away the report. Undaunted, Ida trickily owns and nurses the pregnancy of a teen-age girl, who is afraid to have a baby outside wedlock, for fear of her parents' wrath on her. In an uncanny manner, Ida hides her plot until the reception party at her home for the new baby when the 'top of the lid' is blown off by the very teenage girl who was her accomplice, to the embarrassment of all present. Unable to face her husband Koboko, the long arm of the law, and the talking world and, unwilling to trample on her pride, Ida commits suicide.

Atagwe by Acha Daniel Aghem

At the courtyard of chief Ngaku's palace, Kweti and Akeah contemplate the nature of penalty for Atagwe's misconduct at the palace. Atagwe had committed the offence of drinking from the same calabash of palm wine as the chief. The two councillors agree that the culprit should bring two he-goats to the palace. When Atagwe presents his penalty to the palace, the traditional council met to express its disappointment to Atagwe who has defied traditional ethics not only by belittling the crown but also by getting married to a lady from the coast. To the chief this is a curse on the land as Atagwe whom they all relied on is no longer theirs.

Atagwe's experience in the village transforms him as on arriving he takes a decision to go polygamous against the wish of his wife mami Ndam. With the coming of the second wife, Vero, there is perpetual conflict in the house. Atagwe dies of heart failure. The wives leave for the village where their late husband had not constructed a house and have to live with very uncompromising brothers-in-law. Their new village setting proves hostile to them and they leave for their respective families of origin.

Times Have Changed Anonymous

Pa Ache and his friendly neighbour, Pa Adengwa are conversing in the latter's sitting room. Pa Ache laments that he has cheated himself by accepting only three hundred thousand francs and four sheep as bride price over his daughter. At Ngwa's house Betty threatens to commit suicide on account of the father's decision to marry her to Adangwa who is of her grand father's generation and has five wives already. Ngwa vows to get his sister out of the situation for "times have changed."

Ma Ngube informs Betty of the repercussions of defying traditional values prominent among which would be the ancestors' curse on her. As mother and daughter taunt each other with issues of value, Ache comes in and reminds Betty that there is no time for negotiation, and that Betty is leaving for Adengwa soon. Betty prays fervently for deliverance from such trauma. Ache leads Adengwa into

Betty's room and leaves as Ache struggles to consummate his marriage. In a struggle Betty hits his head and he falls where he loses consciousness and eventually dies. Betty is taken to the dock where the court rules in favour of the accused.

The New Must live with the Old by Bafon Zack Taka

In a village setting called Nepkolbe, Tanyi breaks the news to his wife that their daughter, Nahbila has been 'seized' by the Fon's messengers. She would have to join the "rank and file of the numerous wives" of the Fon. Manyi weeps for what she considers a misfortune. Tanyi reminds her that it is one of those things that may be regrettable but unavoidable and therefore a taboo even to express discontent in public. Manyi tells her son to write and explain what she considers a misfortune that has befallen the family to his elder brother who is a sub prefect of Tiko. Upon reading his letter, Zack vows to intervene even if it means defying traditional ethics. Tanyi encourages Zack to go ahead in private but celebrates the incident in public. Zack sues the Fon in court. His lawyer defends what he calls a criminal case while the Fon defends what he calls an age-old tradition of his people. Zack withdraws the motion. Back at home Tanyi pours libation at the family shrine and calls on his forefathers to cleanse the family and guide every member especially Zack in the face of any harm consequent upon his behaviour.

Mr. Tamba and Mr. Gwim by Dickmu David Rinda

Mr. Tamba tells his friend Mr. Gwim of his intention to send his son Mbunjah to school because the village needs a doctor. Mr. Gwim sees no value in education given the numerous unemployed graduates that he sees in the vicinity. He prefers to make his son a hunter. As Tamba's son leaves for school Gwim celebrates the fact that his son just returned from the wild with four antelopes. Tamba makes a fruitless effort at convincing Gwim that in the current system going to school is more beneficial. Five years later Tambah informs his friend of Mbujah's successes in school that has earned him a scholarship in the UK. Two years later Tambah and Gwim read a

letter from Mbujah in which the latter indicates his intention to return home in two weeks. There is a party to celebrate Mbujah's return and successes. His friend, Ramsack, vows in a soliloquy to drive Mbunjah to hell or heaven. He and his father invite Mbujah and Mr. Tamba for a meal. After the meal Mbunjah suffers from severe stomach disorder. After diagnosing the cause of the illness, Mr. Tambah and his son leave the village and settle in another village.

The Cup by Victor Elame Musinga

A worker, Zawo, joins his colleagues at the treasury on pay-day. There is the usual anxiety that the expectation of the imminent possession of money summons. Three persons address Zawo successively. The first is a woman who vows to take the money Zawo owes her the same day. The second woman reminds Zawo of the fact that he has not paid his rents for three months. The third person is a messenger sent by the president of a club Zawo belongs to. The messenger had been asked to meet Zawo on pay-day and collect his monthly financial contribution for that month and the previous two. Zawo conspires with the pay-master to make it known to all around the vicinity that he (Zawo) has no pay that day. They would then meet at the Akwara off-licence at dusk.

At the Akwara off-licence, the pay master gives Zawo's pay for the month and advises him to cease from irresponsible behaviour. Upon taking pay Zawo immediately swings into drinking from one bar to the other as he taunts bar mates with gibes on sex and life. Meanwhile at Zawo's home his children are wondering where their father has gone to so late into the night. Zawo staggers into the house with his dresses drenched in beer. He has just two thousand francs left out of his salary for the month.

Similar to what informs and shapes thrillers and detective stories, the above are popular narratives that primarily rely on broad narrative stereo-types. The stories are generally repetitive, and the authors would be very reluctant to claim originality of themes, given that the texts feed on the past, contemporary and local issues affecting the lives of the ordinary folks. Granqvist (1990, 81) informs us that the

oral tale has always been applied to enhance group cohesion and group identity. The supposition here is that oral traditions relate to the very centre of a people's founding 'authentic' culture. It would be intriguing to find how the themes emerging from the above plays for radio generate different aspects of a discourse on culture re-animation. It is impossible to know which of these plays were produced given the aforementioned amateurish style employed. However, the near-communal authorship of the scripts and the circumstances surrounding the writings give us the latitude to take them as coming from the people and destined for them. More meaningfully, the collection defines the beginnings of a people's literature and offers an insightful yarn in the loom of Cameroon Anglophone Development Theatre at its budding stage.

Position and Influence: From Stasis to Change

Augusto Boal (2000, IX) argues that those who try to separate theatre from politics try to lead the people into error thereby unleashing a political attitude that ironically engages the people they want to dismember from politics into political awareness. In articulating his theory on theatre, Boal corroborates Freire and Brecht in their appeal for the transformation of the character from an object into a subject of social change. At production, the characters who are also the listeners are subjected to the kind of transformation opined by Boal et al. This is put into proper perspective when we draw from Stone's (1960, IV) theory that creativity in radio theatre in itself is a participatory exercise in which the writer/producer/actor and the listener/audience take full responsibility in the process of realizing a play, with the listener creating the images and the scenes in his mind's eyes as he/she listens. Radio, as a result, offers one of those unique occasions where the barrier between the actor and the spectator is rendered very porous. History then becomes an invaluable source of inquiry as it feeds these plays with its raw materials.

In most of the play scripts, especially those that are historically set during the pre-colonial era, the chief seems to be the singular archetypal figure that incarnates the customs and traditions of the people. The system of government rests on the political and religious power of the chief who often with his close collaborators rules over the land as he deems fit. This explains why when a piece of land, Shah, becomes very fertile in the world of Shey Dule's *How We did Our Things*, Fai begins the task of re-distributing it to his subjects according to 'what tradition demands' (6). The play revolves around the conflict triggered by who gets how much of Shah. In a society where dissenting voices are trampled upon, Fai (the *fon*) is not answerable to anybody, even the traditional council. The invitations he extends to Shufai (the village's chief priest) to come for the seasonal sacrifice of thanksgiving (or sacrifice of atonement as the case may be) are usually not to be questioned by the latter for whatever reasons. Shufai understands that the crown must not be let down, and he has the moral obligation to prepare for the sacrifice in the village's shrine. When the gods of the land vent their wrath on the people, Fai puts in all efforts to bring the situation to normal. He summons and presides over several meetings with his councillors, and when the gods are said to have asked for a sacrifice at the river, he orders for that to be effected.

In *In peril of Our Ancestral Tradition*, John Amuntum explores this unchecked chief's prerogatives. Ngonjo is frustrated as he loses both parents and a kid brother because of the traditional institution. When the victim questions the authority of the chief and his cronies, he is condemned to death by the chief himself:

Impious beast! Double offender. You scorn the very tradition to which you owe your life? Untraditional visitor, who gave you the passage into my palace? The gods of this land forbid invasion upon a king and upon its customs. Away with him to everlasting sleep! (*In Peril*, 8)

In this setting, the word of the chief is law and dissenting voices are not to be tolerated. Such all-powerful personality that commands respect borne more of fear of the unknown than earned reverence to authority, is demonstrated in Peter Fomundam's *The death of Chief Tادكوم*, Mary Ekema's *A short Play on Cameroonian Culture* and John Ngong Kum's *Poison in Bادتوم's Palace*. When the chief takes ill there is general consternation in the land. The village is ill. In *The death of chief Tادكوم* men and women in the land congregate at chief Tادكوم's palace and are prepared to offer as much sacrifice as it requires in saving their chief's life. Even after the chief dies, the cause of his death is surrounded by the same attention and relevance. Ngong Kum's *Poison in Bادتوم's Palace* captures the aura surrounding the chief's state even more succinctly. The play opens with the chief and his close collaborators in his inner chamber. The consternation caused by the chief's ill-health and the rumour that the "Queen mother" is responsible for the illness shock the land. Hope for the better amidst this uncertainty is echoed by the dying chief who names his heir, Bادتوم II, and promises to be in contact with his successor from the world beyond. The death of Bادتوم has created a power vacuum whose impact is short-lived as Bادتوم II succeeds as the successor.

The question of succession is crucial, given the importance of the office of the chief in the day to day life of the people. This explains the worry of chief Molua in Mary Ekema's *A short Play on Cameroonian Culture*. When chief Molua reveals that the absence of a male child who would succeed him is haunting him, the councillors draw from the history of the land to say the chief could name any of his nephews the heir to his throne. They actually go ahead to device a strategy to select a most suitable nephew, Wotami as the heir.

The chief's palace is a symbol of his authority and the peculiarity of its architectural design lends credence to the rights and privileges of the chief in Kum's *Poison in Bادتوم's Palace*, Shey's *How We Do Our Things* and Ekema's *A short Play on Cameroonian Culture*. In Ekema's *A Short Play on Cameroonian Culture* the palace is built of mud bricks and reinforced with a rubble core. The tower in the courtyard is built of

cut stone. The palace has about eighty general servants, some thirty of them female. These are generally not armed. Each of the chief's wives has a hut of her own. In Shey's *How we do our Things* the palace is surrounded by a code of fragile huts where the guards live. Adjacent to the palace are two clusters of huts where the chief's two closest collaborators live. Kum's presentation of the palace in *Poison in Bahum's Palace* is perhaps more fascinating. In the play the chief's palace is a complex structure which "in the eyes of the villagers assumes different shapes in accordance with the changes in weather conditions" (19). Here the series of huts circle the main structure that signifies strength and dignity. There are the huts of the queens. The guards have no specific hut but any body in the palace almost always feels their presence. Adjacent to the palace are sparsely placed clusters of huts where the councillors and their families live.

The councillors are the chief's close collaborators who defend and assist him in the execution of his duties. In Kum's *Poison at Bahum's Palace* the councillors have, besides general functions, specific assignments. The First Councillor ensures that everyone pays all royalties to the chief as demanded by custom. The Second Councillor is charged with transmitting messages to and from the chief. The chief addresses his subjects through him. The Third Councillor is a man of peace. He is the only one authorised to watch the chief while he eats. Under these three top personalities are three teams of lower dignitaries grouped in pairs. Their mission is to receive and house envoys. They are also charged with the responsibility of accommodating the multitude in occasions like the spontaneous response of the people to the chief's ill health and the death of the chief.

In the new reality, in the aftermath of the colonial experience, things are no longer the same. Victor Epie Ngome's *The End of Wealth* captures the division of power and influence between this hitherto closely-knit traditional institution and the "gorment." Tome, the wealthy man in the village of Wokuna is warned against a government order banning free range in animal husbandry. When he fails to follow the instruction from the administration, all his animals

are killed. The chief of Wokuna is helpless as he would not intervene on behalf of his friend Tome for fear of the wrath of ‘gorment’ which is in possession of the power to execute its decisions. The administration has conceived a project on animal husbandry geared towards increase in the quality and quantity of products. The scheme could be very profitable in raising the standard of living in the setting, but that its implementation is distanced from the direct beneficiaries, is not very profitable. Like Tome, the other inhabitants of Wokuna would be scared of the “gorment” instead of taking “gorment” as a willing participant in development initiatives that would help them tremendously. One can predict that the people of Wokuna eventually come to terms with the advantages that the new approach in animal husbandry brings to their lives.

In the same light, the instruction that comes from Bamenda asking the chief of Momboh land to send all the children of his village to school in *The Next Chief* is at best a challenge to the authority of the chief. This threat is echoed at the emergency council session convened by the chief as they look at the consequences of defying the instruction from the ‘white man’ whom they say “uprooted the taproot that held Momboland together” upon setting foot on their land. The council decides to follow the white man’s instruction, not much for the respect they have for his authority, but for fear of the worst that rejection of the “white man”’s instructions may bring to the land. The respect and awe summoned by the “white man” extends to the institution he has brought and implanted on the land. Banfon Taka’s *The New Must Live with the Old* demonstrates this as Tanyi sues the chief in court for wanting to marry his younger sister without her consent. Though the court pronounces the chief not guilty, the credibility of the crown has been reduced tremendously. The chief no longer wields the sort of power and dignity of the precolonial era as reflected in the world of Dule’s *How We did Our Things* and Amuntum’s *In Peril of Our Ancestral Tradition*.

With Alex Ngoh’s *The Maiden Visit of the Governor of the South West Province to Manyu Division*, one no longer hears of the chief at all. This is to say that the chief has been reduced to an appendage to the order

in place. On the programme menu of the visit, the chief is no longer at the centre stage. The governor, after introducing government policy on the different areas of development initiative, casually refers to the chief as the custodian of the peoples' tradition whose place in the "development of the land cannot be overemphasized." The enormous power wielded by the chief before the new administration has been sharply curtailed with the latter taking over control in the community. In this circumstance, the hitherto respected traditional crown becomes an instrument of the administration that is employed to foster its mission, usually at the peril of vested traditional values. Linus Asong has pointedly articulated this state of affairs in his novel, *The Crown of Thorns* (1984), where the local administration gradually takes over control of the affairs of the village from Chief Nchindia, the traditional paramount chief of Small Monje²⁹.

The 'gods' in African cosmic Vision

Like Europeans of the Middle Ages (AD 600-1350), the Africans of the pre-colonial era had faith in the supernatural. Europeans of the Middle Ages saw political authority as coming from God's will. Those bestowed with power on earth therefore could only rule if they were spiritually chosen to do so. Such leaders were God's ambassadors on earth and loyalty to them was to result in spiritual fulfilment.

The political institution in the selected plays under study in this chapter is mixed-up with religion. The system of government rests not only on political power but also on religious power, which is

²⁹ In Asong's *The Crown of Thorns* the administration meddles in the affairs of the crown of an imaginary village called Nkokonoko Small Monje not only by imposing a person who is not the right successor to the throne but also by influencing him to sell the god of gods of the village: an action that tears the village apart and drastically reduces the authority of the crown of Nkokonoko Small Monje. To the people of this village, the world has come to an end when the local administrator conspires with a village chief he has imposed on the people to sell their god of gods to a white man whom they are already looking at with contempt and disdain for appropriating their land in the name of a new religion.

manifested through the priests of the land, the diviners and the ancestors. The characters that people the plays set during the pre-colonial era are religious in most aspects of their lives. To them the gods are fully responsible for all the affairs of life. This explains why, stunned by the mysterious disappearance of women at Shah, Fai in Shey's *The Way We Do Our Things* immediately sends for the diviner who satisfactorily inquires into the bizarre phenomenon. In the same vein, the chief requires the services of Shufai, the chief priest of the land, for the prescribed sacrifice of atonement conducted at the river in order to establish order and tranquillity. The priests command respect from the characters who do all within their capacities to satisfy them as tradition demands.

Awolalu and Adelumo (1979, 275) have argued that traditional African religion has no written literature, yet it is "written" everywhere for those who care to see and read. To them it is a religion whose spiritual founder is neither known nor worshipped. It has no membership drive, yet it offers persistent fascination for Africans, young or old. In discussing the role of religion in pre-colonial African setting, Aiden Southhall (1969) contends that spiritual power is real power, maintaining that religious institutions function as checks and balances in the system of governance. Awolalu and Southhall conveniently underscore the role played by religion in these plays. Notwithstanding their formal roles as leaders of secular societies, rulers here are perceived partly in religious terms, their power derives ultimate origin from the spirit world. The office of Shufai plays a key role in mediating the rights and claims of individuals and groups in *How We Did Our Things*, ensuring that power is not abused in whatever terms it is understood locally. However, they are not always effective in this regard as the society has its own greedy and dictatorial persons in power who demand and expect unquestionable loyalty. Such unquestionable loyalty is demonstrated in Amuntum's *In peril from ancestral Tradition* where Ngonjo's questioning of the excesses of the priests of the land leads to his being executed on instructions of Chief. The characters'

responsibility is to do as ordered by the priest or diviner whom they take for the decoder of the will of the deity.

Every character, including the chief, feels a strong loyalty to the ancestors and respect for the priests, the named living representatives of the gods. In the world of the texts set before the colonial experience, the physical aspects of nature are wholly integrated into the experience of the people. The characters live consciously and sub-consciously within nature. The forest and the river become sources of power, both physically and spiritually. They are both real and mysterious. This mystery is well understood and sometimes orchestrated and/or controlled by the priests. In Shey's *How We Do Our Things*, Tan discovers the mystery surrounding the disappearance of the women of the land at Shah. The diviner had prophesied that a child was going to reveal the reason for the misfortune. Sacrifices are exercises that are needed as part of the order in vogue, and if not conducted as demanded, the smooth running of events and life would be obstructed. The gods through their representatives make the requests for sacrifices on earth.

The characters bestow supreme power to an idea of God as controlling everything and everyone, and doing it indirectly through subordinate spiritual powers. From this governing concept is derived a ruling morality for daily life that fashions out the system of reward and punishment, basically through sorcery and witch-craft. The priest, Shufai, has to preside over a sacrifice of atonement in order to bring back peace and order in the land. It is the same element of nature with its mystery that renders Ta'alah helpless as he faces the god's emissaries and has to run for his dear life. In the course of escaping he falls and sustains injuries that eventually results in his death.

There is a strong feeling of attachment between the living and the dead, hence Bahtum's appeal to his people in Kum's *Poison in Bahtum's Palace* to remain calm, as even after death he would continue to monitor events on the land. The ancestors are venerated, receiving regular offerings from their offspring. There exists between the living and the dead the visible and the invisible. Such a rapport

emblematises the characters' cosmic vision. The participation of the ancestors is assured. They are thought to be aware of the needs of the living and to influence them positively. In return they expect the living to pay homage to them. The priest in *Poison in Baktum's Palace* diagnoses that the spirits of the ancestors are tired and immediately prescribes a ritual at the family vault in order to rekindle their powers. Despite the rapport between man and God facilitated by the ancestors, there are still limitations, as the ways of the more influential gods are not understood by the living. For the ancestors are only intermediaries and do not exert total influence on the living. They are relevant as a link through which the characters address themselves to the more powerful gods. As Bahtum lies in bed during his last minutes First Notable expresses these limitations helplessly: "The words of men are that of the gods, but our wishes are not theirs" (*Poison*, 5). A similar scenario obtains in *The Death of Chief Tadjkon*. The tense atmosphere surrounding the alleged bewitching of chief Tadjkon by one of the sub-chiefs is clarified by the chief's predecessor, who, according to the traditional doctor in attendance, has confirmed that the spirit of the chief is hanging on the "children witches' tree" near the main river in Widikum. This revelation coming from the late chief Oneku, who died 'thirty two seasons' before articulates the strength of the rapport between the living and the ancestors, and more especially, the influence the latter exert on the living. For the characters in these plays, to live is to be "caught up in a religious drama"³⁰.

Such an attachment to religious values has been gravely reduced in the new world reality. The gods are no longer depended upon wholly in times of crises when the new dispensation has ushered in the Christian religion and the new administration. After yielding to the white man's instructions to send children to school in Bamenda, in Mungwa Zacheus' *The Next Chief*, the chief has forgotten about the

³⁰ See Orshio Adasu in *Understanding African Traditional Religion Part one*. Dorset. Dorset Publishing Company, 1985, 14

age-old spiritual custodians of his chiefdom. He simply takes to what the new 'gorment' has brought and does not hesitate to implement the decisions taken by it. In this setting, there is no direct treatment of the Christian God that is in the process of replacing the different gods. However, the impact of the Christian God is echoed here and there in the different plays. When Atagwe unknowingly defies the rules at the chief's palace, his attention is drawn to his other faults. He who serves as the eye of the village in the city is married to just one wife. This to the councillors is in gross defiance of traditional ethics. The Christian religion that preaches monogamy to tie it up with the dictates of modern life in the metropolitan setting had pushed Atagwe into marrying just a single wife. At the crossroads of emerging and assertive modern values in full force and the tradition of his people stiffly resisting it, Atagwe dies from cardiac related complications.

Faced with the calamity unleashed by the forces in Epie Ngome's *The End of Wealth*, Tome refuses to offer sacrifices to the ancestors. Even the chief's insistence that he should offer sacrifices to the gods of the land falls on deaf ears. The chief himself no longer demonstrates that familiarity with the gods who are known to own all that exists in addition to the supposed owners on earth. Tome's defiance of the chief's instructions to perform a sacrifice of atonement is very revealing. It shows the degree to which the characters are beginning to lose faith in their erstwhile powerful gods. The present dispensation is celebrating the presence of one God who is Almighty. The Christian religion which, brings the notion of one and only God, preaches monogamy and renounces polygamy as unchristian. This is the choice made by Atagwe. However, he fails to manager his divided loyalties and when he decides to go back to his traditional polygamous system of marriage, he fails woefully.

Transforming Language and Community Nucleus

In the texts set in the pre-colonial era, life centres on a tributary of blood relationships that meanders through to the 'living dead',

grandparents and grandchildren as long as they are traceable, and various intermediaries from both sides of the bride and bridegroom. The central family unit, most often polygamous, stresses solidarity, oneness and a sense of a common destiny. This extends to the society as a whole and at varying degrees. The society is patrilineal, which justifies the frustration associated with inability to procreate a male child, a reason why chief Molua in Ekema's *A Short Play on Cameroonian Culture* is restive. It takes the timely intervention of his close councillors to calm him.

When a chief falls ill in Kum's *Poison at Bantum's Palace* and Fomundam's *The Death of Chief Tadkom*, it is an affair of the entire community perhaps because it concerns a chief, but more importantly because he is a member of the society. In the same vein, when Tangwe takes ill in Tanto Tata's *The Death of Tangwe*, it is not only the wife and children that cater for him but different relations who feel it their responsibility to take care of their kin in times of worries. Even more amazing is the fact that Tandu discovers that she is related to Manei during an evening-fireside conversation at Tangwa's home. Both of them had come from distant villages on hearing of Tangwa's deteriorating health condition as a mark of filial concern.

The relationship of human beings with the family and the community goes further than living a communal life. The chain of solidarity transcends the economic interdependence that shapes modern life. The precedence of group over individual loyalties takes central stage. All members of the society are interdependent. They are bound together by religious, economic and social ties. Hence in times of misfortune like the disappearance of women at Shah and the death of Ta'alah in Shey's *How We Do Our Things* and Amuntum's *In Peril from Ancestral Worship*, respectively, there is a communal response.

This show of unity and solidarity is expressed in the same strength in times of joy. Among such occasions of merrymaking in this setting is marriage ceremony, a theme tactfully explored by R.M Nguti in *How Ngongila Married a Wife* and Jerome Shey in *The Rescuer*.

Marriage is not simply the affair of the individual couple but of the to-be in-laws and the society as a whole. In Nguti's *play*, it takes a decision during an evening fire-side conversation by Ngongila's father, Nyankemasang and mother, Ngimba, to pour their blessings on the imminent marriage of their son to Mokata's daughter. However, the negotiation does not ensue without the consent of some members of the society. Five elders meet to discuss the issue and only after hours of consultation among themselves do they rule that the negotiations can begin. The three-man delegation that leaves for the Mokata household to declare the intention of the Nyankemasang family is hospitably received. When told of the intention behind the visit Mokata gives his blessings to any such eventuality. He asks to get the bride's opinion, and Nandond says she has accepted Ngongila's hand in marriage "If Papa and Mama like it" (7). Although the bridegroom who is the focal point of negotiation, and her central role in the play is heralded from its title, the ceremony that ensues is that of the entire community and not just the marrying couple or their respective families.

She treats the same subject in *The Rescuer*. While giving the same communal involvement to the marriage project, the latter subjects it to the exploration of the systematic negotiation that precedes the union proper. Lukong and his wife, Wirngo, inform their son, Tantan, of an imminent journey the three of them have to make in pursuit of a 'grinding stone' for the latter. Negotiations begin in earnest after Lukong presents a jug of palm wine and kola-nuts to Ngong's family. Tantan discovers only in the heart of the negotiation at Ngong's home that he is the person on whose behalf the whole project is being carried out. Though in the affirmative, Ngong must seek and obtain the approval of the bride's grandfather, Shufai for the final union between his family and Lukong's family. As all this is going on, emissaries have been sent round the village to consult and investigate with numerous elders in the land if the eventual union would defy any aspect of tradition and custom of the land. Shufai's blessings and Ntang's acceptance of Tantan's hand in marriage ends with feasting, dancing and singing.

Marriage is one of the most significant events in the traditional African setting. It is a way of assuring continuity, and this explains the parental influence demonstrated by Nyankemasang and Lukong in the two plays discussed above. This goes a long way to stress the fact that every generation in the set-up is only a link in an infinitely long array of different generations. This irrevocable sense of continuity, interdependence and unity brings relief. All the characters that people this play are familiar with this. Nyankemasang and Lukong and their spouses recognise the responsibility inherent in their positions. They are part of that stream of life that has been flowing through their families, a stream of life whose continuation must be ensured. In this scheme of things it becomes incumbent on anybody as a recipient of life to make it a point of duty to pass that life onto the next generation not only by procreating but by ensuring the avenue for procreation to the recipient's offspring. Neither Ngongila's nor Tantan's opinion is sought as their respective parents negotiate for their spouses. The individual is despised in favour of the family, the land and/or the community. Tantan's curiosity on the subject of the 'grinding stone' as he carries the jug of palm wine in the company of his father and mother meets with Lukong's reprimand and threats of corporal punishment if he insists. In the same light, when Shufai asks Ntang if she is willing to accept Tantan's hand in marriage, she timidly answers in the affirmative. She is not given the opportunity to reflect before taking a decision concerning herself in a matter as crucial to her life as marriage. When asked the same question in Nguti's *How Ngongila Married a Wife*, Nandon says she will if "Papa and Mama like it." In the world of these two plays, the community functions as a corporate entity in which the private and the public are closely linked, with the private almost always despised in favour of the public. The communal overshadows the personal.

This setting stresses strict etiquette, demonstrated in occasions such as the breaking of kola nuts at the beginning of discussions, the drinking of palm wine during conversations, salutation to the invisible but very 'present' ancestors before drinking palm wine, and

even the need to greet one's neighbour and a passer-by on every instance one meets him or her. This jealously preserved etiquette acquires its strength from the extensive use of proverbs. This is a setting in which past folk memories remain vital. The element of repetition in the daily lives of the characters is emphasised by the importance given to these memories. The rules of successful community life are there and well recognised. The changes and chances of fate may at any time overturn them; and a character must change course.

In his novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Chinua Achebe has shown how an erstwhile closely-knit society disintegrates in the aftermath of the colonial experience. Achebe does not pretend that the pre-colonial African society was utopian. In the first part of the novel which presents that precolonial African society, we find a lot of instability when man wrestles with man, the gods or the society. The instability that is occasioned by the arrival of the white man in part I of the novel is weighty enough to shake the pillars that hold the Ibo society and culture together. Atagwe's sudden death in Acha Daniel Aghem's *Atagwe* from heart failure is not dissociated from the dilemma he faces between loyalty to the tradition of his people and loyalty to the new world order. In the same vein, Tome opts for suicide when he comes face to face with the double-edged sword of the "gorment." That he refuses to abide by the chief's order before committing suicide shows to what degree he is destabilised. Like Achebe's Okonkwo, his remains would not be buried like any ordinary remains. The 'Nganya', a secret society in Bakweri land, would have to bury the remains of Tome.

To draw again from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the foundation of the new world that colonialism has imposed on the African is situated in 'the evil forest' where the Umuofians had, with amazing glee, sent the white man to establish his church. This forest, according to the Umuofians, harbours evil spirits and witches. It is expected that the white man would perish within the first few weeks of settlement in the 'evil forest'. To their greatest dismay the Umuofians do not only see the white man establish his mission in the

evil forest, but they find him building, besides the church house, another imposing structure which they christen 'the administrative building'. By the time Okonkwo returns from exile, there are already administrative officers to administer his village. There is even a structure to protect and ensure the functions of the Administrative officer. There is already an entirely new social order being implanted which contrasts sharply with the hitherto relatively stable community. All these changes are occurring within the limits of a largely subsistence economy and a jealously preserved kin-bound social structure under threats as are reflected in the plays and productions set in the aftermath of the colonial experience.

In these circumstances, that tributary of blood relationship that attaches the 'living dead' to the living is beginning to ebb out. Though mostly polygamous, the central family unit initially stressed wholeness and commonness of purpose with relative success. The unit is no longer strong and united. Mungwa's *The Next Chief* clearly demonstrates this when a half-brother plots and murders a brother in order to succeed their father. That Akeh's mother, Aghem, should mastermind the murder of Ngang for her son to succeed the throne shows to what degree 'things have fallen apart' in Mungwa's imaginary village setting. In the same respect, Dickmu David Rinda's *Mr. Tamba and Mr. Gwim*, the expected progress and development in the village has been grossly compromised when Mr. Gwim gets jealous of Mr. Tamba's son who has come back after studies to serve the village as a medical doctor. Mr. Gwim who had refused to send his own son to school decides to eliminate Mbujah who has settled as the village celebrity and symbol of progress. The entire community is in disarray but has not given up the endeavour to continue on the onward movement towards progress in spite of the unfortunate mishap.

What ensures continuity in the family and the community at large is marriage. Unlike before, when marriage ceremonies generally went on hitch-free, we have a litany of disagreements and divorce cases in the new era. Pa Ache's lament in *Times Have Changed* for having cheated himself by taking the 'meagre sum of three hundred

thousand francs' as bride price for his daughter signals a shift in area of interest on the part of the parents of the marriage couple. We find in Nguti's *How Nkongila married a Wife* for example that the parents of both the bride and the groom have as their major interest the success of the ceremony and that the future of the couple is assured. The value of what is given as bride price is largely insignificant though not negligible. Thus the existing bond whose future ought to be assured is being threatened by cash economy.

Such changes do not result in urbanisation but what is referred to by African sociologists³¹ as 'urban values'. There are certain obvious results that flow from the breakdown of African kinship in these newly emerging settlements (cities). Relationships are strained by financial inability. The quest for a high standard of living by women pushes them into irregular unions with a number of men. Such a temptation is almost irresistible for women who find themselves in poverty-stricken situations. This leads to other consequences like barrenness. Norman (1961, 88) asserts that there are strong but patchy indications of low fertility of women in African cities. Victor Elame Musinga's *Fantastic Madam Ida* explores this phenomenon. Six years after a successful wedding Ida is incapable of making babies. This renders her marital home fragile in a society where barrenness remains an irreparable stigma on a woman in the eyes of men and the society as a whole. A medical report that attributes her barrenness to eighteen abortions she had committed in her hey-days sheds light on the degree of juvenile delinquency that obtains in this imaginary city.

³¹ Sociologists have been in difficulties trying to describe this new world reality whose origin has been tactfully and artistically traced by Achebe in his classic, *Things Fall Apart*. They do not find it appropriate to describe it as an urban area or as a metropolitan centre in the light of what obtains in the capitalist centres of the North. What one hears often is an area with urban values. For more on this, read Edwin Ardener's "Social and Demographic Problems of Southern Cameroon's Plantation Area" in Southall Aidan (ed.) *Social Changes in Modern Africa*. London and New York: OUP, 1969, 83 – 97.

Where pre-marital pregnancy carries a social stigma and illegitimate children are not given adequate care by the family system, girls are faced with an insoluble dilemma. This is more acute where the physical and cultural context of city home life renders domestic fulfilment difficult. Thus the teen-age girl wilfully hands over her baby to Madam Ida. The feeling of kinship still lurks relevantly at the sub-consciences of these city dwellers. Unable to stand the loss of her progeny, the teenage girl decides to surface at the reception party for the child and betray the plot on which madam Ida's marital home depended. Madam Ida would not stand her husband, Koboko, the arm of the law and the society, and so opts for suicide. Worth noting here is that there is no 'secret society' to take her remains for burial like in Epie Ngome's *The End of Wealth*. She is given an ordinary burial, in spite of the abominable manner in which she dies.

The visible changes that obtain in the role of women in postcolonial Africa are to be understood as reactions to the new and basically obvious political and economic forces in operation. A woman may want respectability, education, a white-collar job and a faithful husband and the blessing of children. Most or all of these are practically incompatible. At a time a girl has had enough education and training to secure a scarce job, she has passed the normal age of marriage. She therefore becomes a risk in the eyes of many potential husbands. The doubts in the mind of Mr. Koboko during his marriage formalities, especially when Ida could not present her peers, are worth taking note of here. Koboko's flaw is that he takes an uninformed decision in his choice of Ida as a wife, and at the end his experience serves as a lesson for would-be husbands.

The breakdown in the traditional kinship (in the family or the community at large) is also to be seen on the part of men. The social forces in vogue tend to create a high demand for women on the part of men. Men have the tendency to spearhead many irregular sexual liaisons. Victor Elame Musinga zooms on this in *Madam Magrano* as Madam Magrano finds her husband's love for her slipping. She would learn eventually that Mr. Magrano is having a secret love affair

with a prostitute. In a desperate move to regain her husband's love she unknowingly administers poison to him.

There is a tendency in African development research endeavours not to give enough attention to linguistics as a crucial vehicle of social transformation. When addressed at all, the multi-lingual nature of African societies is perceived as an impediment to development. A critical look at the use of language in radio drama provides a rich and compelling relationship between language and development. The use of language in radio drama production provides an intriguing perspective to this lopsided viewpoint. With some empirical observations on this subject, we view the relationship between language and development while exploring the use of language in radio drama.

This theme is better illuminated by the story of six agricultural extension officers from the Department of Agronomy in the University of Dschang, Cameroon. These agriculture scientists had graduated from this University a few years earlier and were poised to impart new and innovative farming technologies to rural farmers in various areas of the country. The North West Region was their first stop where they would experiment in one of the biggest farms in Bali Sub-Division. On the very first day of their mission they grappled with one crucial issue which had obviously been neglected during their training: language, that invaluable tool of communication that carries with it a prism through which its users see things. Despite all the theorising in the academia about the usefulness of modern methods and the need to share such methods, they had not thought about the medium by which to share the methods. The authorities of their University never thought that they would have to work with people who did not communicate in their language of studies at the University, the medium in which all the feasible and attractive theories on agricultural extension were to be transmitted.

Nevertheless, writers and critics of culture have advocated for local coloration in cases where artists might not have an authentic indigenous language to express themselves. According to Donald Crowley (1970, 120) in the mid- nineteenth century Herman Melville

urged American artists to abandon their “literary flunkeyism towards England.” He was advocating for greater literary independence, increased awareness of the American expression as the appropriate medium through which to give authenticity to the American experience. This to him was indispensable if American literature was to pass from footnotes to English literary tradition into a tradition in its own right. Nigeria’s Chinua Achebe was expressing the same thinking when he argued for the need of the African writer to rework the internal relationships of the communicative medium so that it accommodates more of the African experience in life and art. In *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (1985, 62) he states:

The English Language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience, but it will have to be a new English, still in full command with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings. This desire to construct the idiom and a rhythm in which are reflected the African resources of diction is an essential quality...

Thus in literary scholarship there has been a considerable attempt at addressing the language question. This attempt has not been very evident in development discourse.

This anecdote on the agricultural extension workers above shows the casual attention given to the language issue in African development discourses. Very often discussions on the wherewithal of African development are done with very little if any attention to language issues. Two reasons account for this neglect. The first is that development is pretty often perceived in a westernized narrow sense wherein experts quickly get their calculators and begin the process of figuring out the country’s gross domestic product and per capita income. Secondly, the other reason for which the linguistic factor has not featured prominently on African development conversations is that the role of language in these societies is often not understood. It is easier for scholars to argue that any language can be used to express African culture. It would be argued that the western

indicators to development in Africa and the argument for language neutrality take away from African languages the marginal position required by contemporary development scholarship. The effect of radio drama production demonstrates that African indigenous languages are central to African development, even if they are borrow extensively from other languages. Because of this, language remains a very important factor in development discourses on Africa. If development is considered as a sustainable economic, socio-cultural and technological transformation of a people, then social transformation cannot be possible without a language; hence language is a huge factor in the development conversation. The reasons for which language assumes such an invaluable role is easily seen in the very nature of language and its effect on the society.

There is plenty of literature on the functions and nature of language to the society; linguist and language theorist Ferdinand Saussure states that language is a system of signs. Saussure says languages are similar in that every language is a system of signs for encoding meanings and realities of one's environment. One would deduce the obvious from Saussure's take on the nature of language: that language is culture specific; therefore each language is different from the other in the way its signs are arranged for it to encode meaning. Therefore, each language is an appropriate tool for encoding the uniqueness of the specific environment in which its speakers live. Sapir (1992, 49) religiously corroborated this view by asserting that:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but we are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large

extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.....We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.

Because a language would naturally relate to specific cultures first, each specific language is likely to represent the speakers of the culture it encodes. This would be the argument for the close rapport between language and society in every part of the world. From these thoughts one would deduce that language is a prism through which a people perceive their realities and themselves. It is a way of seeing things, and it is this way of seeing things that best contains and articulates the indigenous belief systems, be they political, cultural, social, economic or technological. Every new belief system in a setting would be instantly related to these existing systems. In this regard therefore, language has a determinant function in the society, and it should have that relevance in development discourse in the African setting because the most intelligible reactions by speakers to new ideas and technologies are seen via their language. If language has this influence on development, it would be of interest for a discourse on development to attempt an in-depth take on development as a socio-cultural transformation process.

Development has continued to be a highly contentious subject proven by the diverse approaches (be it dependency or modernist) within the field of development studies today. What is increasingly clear is the fact that measuring development, especially in less developed societies would not be adequate with the skewed calculation of a country's gross domestic product or per capita income but an evaluation of the transformation of the entire socio-cultural, political and economic belief systems of a particular setting. It is within this holistic perception of development that the language factor caves in heavily on conversations on development discourse in any country. Because development is tied to the proper transformation of the economic, political and socio-cultural systems of a country with language seen as a vehicle for the transmission and

dissemination of these political, economic and socio-cultural systems of belief, it is then logical to conclude that a feasible conception and execution of these societal transformations can hardly be achieved without the effective use of the languages spoken by the people, no matter how codified or internationally known such a language is. The language of the indigenous people is germane for effective development initiatives to take effect.

If the language factor takes such an important place in mainstream development discourse, it takes an even much more prioritised position in the more recent paradigms of development which emphasize popular participation, indigenous know-how and community initiatives. This is where Development Theatre and Radio Drama enters and evolves neatly in the dynamic, for it is difficult to make sense of or appreciate most of the plays written for radio that we have been analysing in this chapter if one does not take into consideration the language factor in community-initiated development discourse.

Land as Economic Foundation

The major area of human activity that guarantees the sustainability of life in the play scripts set before the colonial experience is agriculture. Land is essential to the existence of the characters. Wealth is evaluated in terms of how many pieces of land a man tills and the size of his family. Hence in Amuntum's *In peril from Ancestral Tradition* what makes an already precarious economic situation worse at Ta'atah's home is the fact that he opts for monogamy. He is not recognised as a man in his society as opposed to Takong in Shey's *The Way We Do Our Things* who takes his wives to Fai to justify the need for a piece of land at Shah. Takong tells Fai that he has just wedded one more wife. On the strength of his polygamous standing he is listened to and responded to favourably as opposed to Shavla who comes to Fai alone. Subsistent farming constitutes the crucial economic foundation of these societies with everybody involved – men, women and children. The politico-

religious structure gives legitimacy to the land-based economic relations to govern, guide and control the behaviour of characters. Land is the centre of the world and the chief's palace is the centre of that land. The deeply spiritual characters also find in this major economic base spiritual attributes, a mythical quality. It is sanctified as the ancestors' place of origin by their past great deeds and their graves. Consequently any threats on land border on not only economic recession but spiritual crisis as well. Here, land is not a private property. It belongs to the community and only the chief may dispose of it when necessary and according to the custom of the land. Each household may, however, possess its own farm land. This is the case of Tangwe in Tanto's *The Dead of Tangwe* whose wife, Ginje, leaves for the farm to cut the herbs prescribed by the medicine-man who had insisted that the herbs must be harvested from a piece of land tilled by Tangwa.

By tilling the land Ta'alah produces most of the food for his family in Amuntum's *In peril from Ancestral Tradition*. He must perform rites at the graveside of his ancestors to ensure the fertility of the land. He is also very conscious of his obligations to the laws of the land. That is why he escapes when confronted by the sacred emissary of the gods. In his own words:

There are certain things on which you have to seal your lips. It does not matter what people think or say, the society does not want to offend its ancestors by changing its customs. Even the big men of the juju society argue that no wise man would reduce his income by scaring away would-be victims. Had it burst in to me I should have been killed, and my children or relatives held, their resources drained away, my property turned into its own. (*In Peril*, 4) (sic)

While it is true that there are certain things 'on which one should seal one's lips' within the context of the precolonial world as seen in the different plays presented this far in this chapter, threat of an unavoidable change lurks in at the background as the youths are

beginning to question the order of things. This curiosity eventually looms large and the foreign element comes in to give it pace and direction. Rolock Chieh's *The Last War* is an apt dramatisation of the first influence exerted on the virgin land by an external element. The play is a dramatisation of the first participation of the "red men" in a dispute between two neighbouring villages. The chief of Azor is determined to fight the war that is necessary for his village to recover the piece of land he claims Owe had seized from his subjects. It takes the intervention of the "red men", who come in and side with Owe for no stated justifiable reason, for the war that has taken five seasons to come to an end. On the "red men's" departure the person of Owe through their chief express profound gratitude for the intervention and hopes that he will continue to be of help to them. The economic change that the 'red men' bring with them has undermined the traditional basis of livelihood. Those old norms and values have found expression in new forms.

In African development issues the centre-periphery inclination of high-tech experts are reflected in the concentration of research, training and extension on what is exotic and therefore marketable rather than what is indigenous and consumed at the primary phase of production. Adasu (1985, 38), describes the peoples' passionate identification with neo-traditional chieftainship, even if deprived of its executive power and its pre-colonial and colonial role in the adjudication of local conflicts, their persistence in unsophisticated kinship-organised subsistence agriculture and poaching, and their rejection of cash-crop production. One would have expected more of an explicit treatment of the impact of the issuing change on the people and the social order it creates. For, many of the practices of the people earlier were regarded as backward and primitive were later recognised as sophisticated and appropriate. Chambers (1986) provides a lucid example of such underestimation of local people's ways in mix cropping: the practice of growing two or more crops simultaneously on the same piece of land. This practice has been an age-old one in subsistence farming in West Africa in particular. But for several years it was regarded as backward and illogical. Experts

described the local cultivators as ignorant and adamant to change that will improve their lot. One would not expect much from experts who are coming with background and training in the agriculture of temperate climates in the West. And yet not only have many of the “irrational and wasteful practices of traditional African farming” been found to be prudent and sound, mixed cropping has been shown to have advantages and is being encouraged in most of West Africa. In writing and producing plays via radio that address these concerns, the radio playwrights and the producers open an avenue for the local farmers to come to terms with the validity of what is theirs. They would be more equipped with a sense of confidence in themselves as they learn and develop alternative methods. Such blatant disregard of indigenous ways of life has been seen in this chapter as deeply troubling, for it is clear that the troubling pace of economic development in Africa has much less to do with dependency theory or modernisation theory. The problem is to be traced in the missing links in development strategies, such links would be the people’s indigenous cultural values.



*A farmer in Northern Nigeria holding tight to his radio
Courtesy: Farm Radio International*

Conclusion

Predicated on the hypothetical stance that Cameroonian Radio Theatre (and African Radio Theatre in general) is a viable alternative to Development theatre, we have examined the role radio drama plays in the kind of interaction and action that side with the powerless masses right from its conception. Chapter one established the background to Development Theatre as a whole, exploring the factors that led to the emergence of the practice in the early seventies and showing development theatre as the new theatre with defined functional objectives. It ensures socio-economic development practice through culture re-animation. This strategy is timely, for the modernist and dependency theorists on Africa's deplorable economic situation is becoming as moribund as the heralded literature of combat that has not registered tangible benefits to the masses in the African setting. With insights from scholars like Frommlet, Mazrui and Eyoh, the chapter spotlighted the different phases of Africa's malady readily found in armies of jobless graduates, deplorable infrastructure, and weak institutions. The second chapter gave the theoretical basis and critical focus vis-a-vis radio drama. Theorists like Oboler, Stone and West and major new historicists from Brecht through Freire, Boal and Fanon to Greenblatt supplied the critical lodestone. These theorists argue for placing history at the centre of literary appreciation. Because Development Theatre draws extensively from local cultural values, the history of these settings would be germane in appreciating these works. Critical focus on radio drama, particularly on Cameroon Anglophone radio theatre proves rather arid. A few publications on development radio in South-East Africa, where David Kerr has been the major voice over the years on subject served as the residue from which to posit the critical stance of the chapter.

We establish the broader context - the birth, growth and limitations of mainstream Development Theatre in chapter three while arguing that radio drama is a viable alternative to the practice in

Africa. The chapter examines the factors that militated for the beginning of Development Theatre practice in Botswana, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Cameroon. Exploring the different countries with their peculiarities highlights the potential of Development Theatre as a practice in democratic values that empowers, energises and provides a voice for the voiceless in Africa. Perhaps Kidd (1979, 6) puts it more succinctly:

...drama attempts to show not only the immediate situation but the larger socio-political system of which it is a part. The particular strength of drama is its capacity to portray conflict, which lends itself to a dialectical reading of the world, revealing the underlying class relationships and structures which influence the social situation. This view of the world must be consolidated and sharpened through dialogue: the role of drama in this case is not to provide a finished view of the world, to prescribe the answers but to engage the audience itself in the production of meaning, in finishing or resolving the drama.

Even Eyoh's take on the relevance of Development Theatre practice in Africa is further illuminating. He (1986, 102) states that theatre

...by its very nature and particularly because of its communality and fictionalized situations provides a forum whereby communication between members of the same community and between them and those others without who intervene in the community's life can take place without the attendant antagonisms which would normally occur in a directly realistic situation. Many theatre practitioners and adults and educators have sought to rediscover theatre's potential as a mobilisational tool. Theatre is being used in Africa today to stimulate community thinking, develop self-confidence, participation, expression, awareness and

organizational strengths of popular groups, communities and organizations. Popular theatre builds on the skills the people already have; the actors provide the songs, choreograph and the dances, create the scenario and are responsible for the themes to be developed.

Listening to Kidd and Eyoh one sees a utopic platform with much for Africa, whereas the practice has drawbacks and both scholars readily admit this elsewhere. In Africa Development Theatre has often claimed to be a purveyor for social revolution whereas it has not been able to face corrupt and inept governments in any palpable manner. Other hurdles range from the inherent double standards gleaned from the fact that its practice in Africa is often spearheaded by experts who are usually not part of the masses through the usually cursory nature of the workshop due to donor influence on the mode and/or workshops themes. Citing the Kamiriithu case in Kenya, Byram (1999, 116) argues that:

Through this workshop, several participants have openly disagreed. Dickson Mwansa, a Zambian adult-educator, argued that it balkanized the momentum meant to create a global movement. Theatre artists such as Penina Mlama and Ndumbe Eyoh maintained that the workshop was unable to establish a base for community theatre in Murewa and resembled what Kidd once identified as an “outside in approach”... As was typical with this style of Theatre for Development, with the projects being so departmentalized, the results differed from one group to another. Eyoh felt that the language problems, though invigorating, also limited the process. Others argued that the number of participants and the designated area of the project were too large and had thus hindered the programme’s effectiveness. Thompson Tsodzo, though he did not participate in the project, felt that the project had made “guinea pigs” of the people of Murewa, affording them no substantial programme of action but

allowing the foreign participants to engage in another intellectual exercise.

These are impediments to the practice in Africa; hence the use of radio as an alternative to dynamise the practice for better results gains grounds. The reasons are numerous and include the cost-effective nature of radio theatre in particular and development broadcasting in general as in South Africa and Malawi.

Chapter four examines the radio as a gateway into theatre for the multitude. Chronicling the place of orality in African culture as held by Ruth Phinegan (1978), radio drama is projected as highly useful in a continent whose culture largely depends on word of mouth. A productive relationship obtains between literature and the media since besides being a huge compliment to literature by way of dissemination, the media is at the centre of the beginnings of African written literature as demonstrated in the case of Nigeria (Lindfors, 1978) and the Guinness- Cameroon/Radio Buea corpus. The latter constitutes most of the primary material analysed in chapter six. The pioneers in African broadcasting had a predilection for development broadcasting even prior to the introduction of radio theatre on the continent. Referring to the Malawian and Zambian examples, Kerr (1998, 136) states as follows:

The staffing of radio Zambia and Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) has been almost totally localised. The programme content too, apart from occasional play or documentary and for the quite large amount of western (mostly pop) music, has been localised. There is some threat to the local content, however, by the emphasis on commercialisation and cost-effectiveness introduced under the IMF Structural Adjustment Programme, especially after the introduction of religious and commercial private stations. There is a real threat that overt cultural imperialism could make a comeback through evangelical or commercial channels.

The circumstances surrounding the Guinness/Radio Buea Corpus are shown to be a significant phase in the history and development of Cameroon Anglophone Writing. A survey that assesses the degree to which people listen to radio drama and its impact on them as individuals and as a community is conducted on this chapter. The survey brings out the generally imperceptible role radio drama plays in inspiring questions about everyday crucial matters to the common man.

Chapter Five outlines the aesthetic qualities of radio drama while exploring the practical developmental value of development broadcasting gleaned from selected productions and the cases of South Africa and Malawi. Radio drama success is almost always achieved by team effort, given that a script is not yet radio drama until it is produced by a producer who is hardly often the playwright. Radio drama invites the audience as part of the creative process, corroborating Bertold Brecht who warns that we should not take the audience for granted, or Freire who cautions against dehumanising the have-nots in the society. In continuation, the sound components, which are the primary factors in the production of Radio Drama, are examined briefly. Attention is paid on the invaluable place of sound in Radio Drama, the aesthetics and practicality of radio theatre, South African and Malawian cases that offer profound utilitarian dimension of art forms. Guy Bessette (2004, 15) captures the substance thus:

Participation is central to the task of defining and achievement development. Participation focuses on empowering local people, through building their conviction that they are not permanent victims of any situation. By empowering local people first, participation does not become an 'extractive process' of information, enlisting or mobilising community support for centralised projects conceptualised, planned and controlled outside the local environment. This form of participation is thus centred on providing a conducive environment and forum through which

communities are helped to understand their socio-economic challenges and act upon the debated issues. Participation is therefore a collective praxis of decision-making within the community in which communities are involved in identifying and planning their own development problems, in seeking solutions and in taking decisions on how to implement them. This mode of participation therefore, entails an inclusive development, inclusive in that consultation requires making constant contacts with the majority of the local community, without manipulating them to accept outsiders' thinking towards a particular problem.

Bessette captures the nitty-gritty of development theatre, and employing the new historicist theory, we come to the conclusion in this chapter that Mumba, Ndiva, Mulewa, Musinga and Ngome with their different producers together with the Experts in DramAid in South Africa and those with Malawi Broadcasting Corporation's (MBC's) Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) and their respective audiences are development agents who are not being given the deserved credit and recognition. Radio, we aver, remains a compelling medium in bringing people together and engineering conversations about their livelihoods and power dynamics.

Chapter six investigates the notion of development vis-a-vis selected Anglophone Cameroon plays for radio. Here it is evident that one of the major causes of underdevelopment in Africa as a whole is that indigenous culture is the missing link in development initiatives. Drawing extensively from Brecht, Freire, Boal and Greenblatt, we explore and analyse the Guinness/Cameroon corpus and come to the conclusion that although most of the plays were never produced in Radio Buea as expected, the budding writers open a very significant window into a nation's narrative. The playwrights capture the moment in their history, and they need to be recognised as their works provide a very significant page in a people's culture which is the starting point for advancement as articulated by Development Theatre in an effort to heal Africa's multiple wounds.

The African encounter with Europe and the West in general over the last five centuries has indelibly shaped the continent's character and current reality. It is often considered as escapist or intellectually suspect to argue that colonialism and/or neo-colonialism is the root detractor of lofty efforts in Africa to achieve social and economic progress. The contention is that it is easy to shift the charge on the continent's failure to the West whereas Africans have, for the most part, been in control of their own affairs for close to half a century. Logically, one would expect the continent to take responsibility for its multiple failures glaringly seen in corrupt, infelicitous, dictatorial and undemocratic or anti-people practices. Nonetheless, most of what obtains in Africa is beyond the control of Africans. The abundant minerals produced in Africa are controlled by Western capital. Africans do not control the price of commodities they take to the world market. There is persistent economic slow-down resulting from pernicious and biased trade practices that are perpetrated by the West and related Bretton Woods institutions. These institutions have become very influential power brokers in most African countries. Most of these African countries, independent since the late nineteen fifties and early nineteen sixties, face fierce neo-colonial onslaughts that often come with a veneer of development initiatives. For decades, such billowing propaganda about development in Africa have turned out to be for the gallery as the teaming populations in the continent's cities and countrysides languish in misery in the midst of plenty. All the same, the root cause of Africa's troubling malaise is to be traced to the colonial encounter because in bringing the modern techniques into the pre-colonial and pre-industrial setting, it disfigured the continent's age-old processes of development, ushering in what was not only alien to the people but also unjust. The pangs of this imposed road-map for development in Africa is despicable, and the continent is in dire need of general overhaul. While questioning the usefulness of Western-oriented high-tech development strategies on the continent today, more attention is being paid to processes of building up communal strength to energise the collective efforts of the community into generating development strategies via a process

of critical awareness of the contradictions with which they are faced. Development Theatre emerges as one of these innovations geared at empowering the people, with radio theatre in particular offering a novel alternative to the enterprise in Cameroon in particular and Africa in general.

The Utilitarian Twist in Radio Theatre

In main stream Development Theatre practice, the process is what is sought and given impetus more than the product. Development Theatre prizes the process much more than the product; the former takes precedence because of the underlying educational motif of the practice. From the analysis in chapters three and four of this work, it is clear that germane to the Development Theatre workshop are the different phases during which the targeted audience or community lives the enactment thereby taking a critical look at their own fear, hope and challenges. A product-oriented approach to Development Theatre is bound to be counter-productive because of what Okagbu (1998, 38) calls the inherent adhocism which it brings about. Okagbu substantiates his assertion thus:

The main danger which the product-oriented approach leads to as programme of Theatre for Development is this adhocism that is borne out of a consumerist and capitalist ethics, an ethic in which there is always a necessity to differentiate between the producer and the consumer, the have and the have-not, and by extension in the context of Theatre for Development, the performer and the spectator. The implications of this essentially capitalist dualism and its compartmentalizing binary opposition are many, especially for the Theatre for Development group itself. It has often been argued that you do not have to be poor in order to work for or identify with the poor. It is true that a majority of the catalysts involved in Theatre for Development either come from a middle class background or have become middle class

by virtue of their educational attainment and so in socio-economic terms are usually better-off than the masses of oppressed peoples who are targets of their Theatre for Development activities.

The temptation in Development Theatre practitioners, especially the pioneers of the practice in the early seventies was to lean on the product-aimed process thereby posing as indispensable experts on whose skills the people in the targeted community depended for the improvement of their lot. This perception of themselves as outside, savvy individuals bringing the development to the have-nots defeats the underlying aim of the Development Theatre practice. It is what, in condemning, Freire calls the ‘banking system’ of education wherein the teacher has all the knowledge and information needed to provide to the ignorant and unsophisticated student. In this sense it is the outside development worker who has all the means and the technical know-how that will provide solutions to the problems of the poverty-stricken communities. In development communication theory explored in chapter three of this work this amounts to the dominance model of the communicator-audience relationship in which the communicator owns and controls the source and the context while the audience is reduced to an object of mass persuasion. This model is peculiar in that information flow is one-way, with very little or no input from the audience. Condemning this model, Freire argues that genuine learning would never be obtained under this model because the human mind is not triggered to think in a critical way but relies on the teacher whom it assumes knows all. In this same light when outside groups enter into a community as researchers and experts and leave after a few weeks or months, as obtained in Gobone, Kumba, and other practices discussed in chapter three, we end up with short-term excitement and recognition that characterize the collection of data and the enactment of a play in that community. This procedure may bring some heated debate and discussion, but it would hardly bring about the kind of awareness and conscientization that the community would benefit from if it were to

own, initiate and make use of the theatre process for itself. Eyoh's confession ten years after the 1984 Kumba workshop speaks to the troubling outcome emanating from the out-side 'saviour' who plays the *deux-ex-machina* and leaves the stage.

Harding (1998, 39) highlights and corroborates Boal's take on this by opposing the movement from 'simultaneous dramaturgy' (when the spectator writes the dramatic action while the actor acts it as it is being written) to the forum in which the spectator delegates no power to the character (actor) either to act or think in his place; on the contrary, he himself assumes the protagonist role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change. In engaging in these he/she trains himself for action as he becomes that real owner and controller of the stage. Largely drawing from his experience in Madina, Ghana, Harding further states that:

It is the play environment, its tension-free ambiance and its ability to release creative energy that can give a critical voice and expressive physicality to an otherwise voiceless and awkward group of oppressed and deprived people. Play is liberating as it enables the participants to drop the constraints and inhibitions of daily social masks and take risks into the unknown which is the zone of knowledge. And it was for this reason that in our training workshop in Madina, we had actively sought to encourage the adoption of an attitude of play to any Theatre for Development activity. A significant part of the workshop was devoted to teaching the participants to re-learn or re-discover the spirit of play which tends to be generally lost as individuals grow and move out of childhood. And in keeping with the desire to work within existing traditional forms, we wanted the cultural officers to incorporate in their subsequent cultural traditional games that the people play or used to play as a means of gradually introducing people into the theatre process. The games were to set the play tone which was to be maintained all through the process.

The product-driven approach in Development Theatre practice would also unavoidably bring the influence of donor agencies and governments as they would make the practice an instrument for

propaganda peddling. Drawing from the example in Ghana neatly narrated by Harding and Okagbu, the government took Development Theatre workshops as part of its functional literacy programme and not an independent activity with its own objectives and goals. The outlined themes for the workshop here were already carved out, and the idea was to develop plays around these themes and direct the people to act them in their communities. Some of the key themes about development were drug abuse, lack of health care provision, poor sanitation, teenage pregnancy, youth unemployment, and evils of illiteracy. The policy of expectation ran contrary to the underlying approaches to Development Theatre defined by Freire and Boal. The government injected itself into this program, and it did not result in the avowed awareness that is the leit-motif of Development Theatre practice.

Ross Kidd's (1989, 26) notion of a 'drama that never finishes' speaks insightfully to the process-focused nature of Development Theatre, for this is supposed to be a theatre in which any interruption by a spectator brings newer and more innovative dimensions in the dialogue. The main thing here is that everyone has the voice and the space to intervene when ever he/she deems a point necessary. This is the thinking that underlies Boal's forum session in which the spectators continually intervene to interrogate and change the course and direction of the action on stage once it is not in their choice; this would go on until such a time that they will find a consensus on the focus and direction of the play. As such nothing is ever presented as the end-product of their theatrical action, and there is never a final view as ideas continue to pop up for consideration and action. Here the play does not have to end. Not emphasising the end product, the practice draws attention to the process lived by the participants. Okagbu (1998, 118) has rightly stated that:

The notion of play as an attitude to an activity or a series of activities carries with it a reduction of tension or pressure, an absence of judgement, an abandonment of holds and inhibitions, plus a clearing from the head of the cobwebs of

social and cultural conditioning to enable learning and encountering new experiences to take place. All this is possible because of the volitional nature of play which predisposes every participant to push themselves and their experiences to the limits, and it is only at such moments that true illumination can occur. And so a process-led Theatre for Development is fun for the people who take part in it, but it is the fun of knowing that the individual can go all the way, that there are no limits and that within the rules of the game, every individual ability as well as limitation is recognised and accommodated. In the end there are no stars and no walk-ons, no producers and consumers, just as there are no spectators and performers. What we have is a participating group made up of members of a community, village, neighbourhood or inmates in a prison or patients in a hospital ward.

If the focus of Development Theatre is on the process as substantiated above, the actors and the audience are bound to plough the same field for the learning process to go on. Given the shortcomings and the factors that impair Development Theatre practice in the many cases seen this far, Radio Theatre offers a compelling alternative to the practice. Radio Theatre naturally engages the audience in the process at its very beginning. As Radio Drama theorists McNeice and Oboler have argued (see chapter five), creating the images and the scenes rests on the radio drama listener who plays a central part in the creation/production process. There could be no better way of engaging in an all-inclusive approach to the process of initiating development. This is even more meaningful when one buys into the take that the audience's participatory role in a Development Theatre process reaps its utmost benefit at the socio-psychic level where the people are relocated from the periphery of inaction to the centre of action on matters pertaining to their well-being. This is the people empowerment trail that sticks; it is not

ephemeral like the experimentations examined three. It creates a context for reflection and action via entertainment.

The inclusive education approach has been explored in different parts of Cameroon via community radio although national radio stations continue to produce radio plays. The primary aim of community radio is education through entertainment. It very generally educates the community by bringing the views of ordinary folks to the limelight thereby triggering thoughts about the issues that are likely similar to that faced by other regular folks in the community. In stimulating such discussions and a critical understanding of issues and contradictions underlying their common reality, realities and possibilities are illuminated and strategies for action prepared. This occurs with the “Bayam Sellams” of the Bamenda food market explored in Chapter four. The play “Nanu the Village Doctor” produced over Radio Hot Coffee clarifies the possibilities and strategies for action in an amazingly beneficial manner. The production has been used as a tool to mobilise the women and enhance their awareness of the need to address their concerns. Eyoh (1984, 181) recognises the relevance of radio in enhancing social mobilisation when he posits that:

Radio Drama is suitable to be used as a medium of social change conflict resolution, discussion on human rights, democracy and gender issues both in and outside the classroom. Radio drama gives voices to the voiceless. It is a medium for both children and adults... through radio drama local community radios can reflect local identity and culture of the people, representing different groups and interests in the community with an inclusion of marginalized and minority groups. Local language and cultural expressions are raw material for community Radio Plays. This in itself is a sure means of preserving our indigenous languages which are under threats by the obstinate and assertive cash economy.

It is in this manner that radio plays the invaluable role akin to the avowed goals of mainstream Development Theatre.

In providing a platform for communication at the disposal of the voiceless, Development Theatre corroborates Bertold Brecht (1964) who encourages audiences to resort to critical thinking rather than getting knee-deep into the story and identifying with the characters. Brecht had gone further to elevate the audience to the rank of the elites who are very intelligent, and who have the capacity to think critically. Brecht would be invariably corroborated by Paolo Freire (1972), Augusto Boal (1985) and Frantz Fanon (1961) in the quest for a utilitarian theatre that gets both the actor and the audience on board. By inviting the latter and the former to a somewhat imaginary but very illuminating and invigorating theatre that is limited to the “darkness of the head”, Radio Drama offers a new alternative for the emancipation and cultural awareness of both rural and urban audiences. Radio drama takes the audience as, in Brecht’s own words, ‘thoroughly intelligent’ (1964, 14) by making it part of the creation process that Stone (1960, IX) finds as the only in which the creator is essentially the ‘suggestor’ while the audience does the ‘actual creating’. Such a participatory exercise provides a more meaningful alternative to Development Theatre’s goal of change and the possibility of bringing it about with the full involvement of the people for whom the progressive change is intended.

Interestingly, there are very few critical scholarly discourses on radio theatre in spite of its potential in generating awareness via culture re-animation. Even so, the few scholars to invest in it in the likes of David Kerr, Wolfram Frommlet and Winfried-Ioo Graff pay attention to cultural radio as a whole thereby giving an oblique concern to radio drama as a unique and vibrant tool for engineering awareness. Kerr’s is a laudable effort as he traces the history and development of radio theatre in East Africa thereby historically providing a picture of the landscape within the scope of his study. This book therefore, is one in a series of investigations into the depth and breadth of radio drama as an instrument that arms the people with dynamic ways of relating to their peculiarities. It is evident that

African radio has the potential for more, and indeed, there should be much more to it. It is palpable, as clear as proven by the survey conducted in Buea and Bamenda (Cameroon) that news and current affairs about everyday events are no longer enough, and that at best these get stale when the people get recurrent journalistic displays and political slogans on an item that if given a popular twist, especially through enactments on radio, would be of more value to the people.

Radio Theatre serves as an educational process that is problem-solving. It preaches interactive learning that is characterized by continuous questioning of reality and adaptation. It disparages the omniscience of the superstructure meant to be perceived as indispensable and all-knowing. Radio Theatre has been found in this study to provide a unique manner of disseminating and reanimating local cultural traits.

In taking to radio theatre the practical everyday events and experiences of the common folk, like what the radio playwrights and producers of the Guinness corpus do, the African radio playwrights and the producers pave a path that would eventually lead the dispossessed commoner from the periphery towards the centre. In this way the radio plays tend to reveal an imperceptible role that plays written for radio play in enhancing a participatory approach in development issues in the community. The tendency to dwell on practical everyday issues of the common man in a very down-to-earth manner provides a fertile ground for such an all-inclusive framework. In addition, it gives room for overt realism. Radio plays like Nora Elu Mumba's *Kofi the Village Doctor*, Victor Elame Musinga, *Fantastic Madam Ida*, Bole Butake's *Betrothal without Libation* Victor Epie Ngome's *The first Defence*, John Ngong Kum's *Poison at Babtum's Palace* represent the kind of realism that is reminiscent of the rustic and ascetic lives of the underprivileged in the society. These are the types of plays that would liberate the people and enhance their self-esteem because they make provision for an enormous degree of authenticity, hence a maximum identification on the part of the listeners. These listeners are likely to argue for and against certain characters. They may take sides, laugh or regret with their chosen heroes.

The characters that people these plays keep in line with the habit and attitude of their real images, and so does the story. There may be digressions, but they are usually not too remote from what would obtain in reality. In this way the plays construct cultural identity in that imaginary space of belonging that is analogous to the nation. The masses that have been deprived of their pride and dignity listen to their peers talk on radio in dramatic and literary ways. If their likes are heard on radio expressing the same needs with which they easily identify, it means that they constitute an entity with common needs, hopes and fears. This unavoidably prepares grounds for possible concerted effort that would empower and energise them to become active partners in developmental issues. If the people, like the “Bayam-sellams” of the Bamenda neighbourhood in Cameroon, or the Kantha n’khama in Malawi discussed in chapters four and five, respectively, have the avenue provided by a radio play to discuss general abject poverty or the conditions of women in a male-dominated hostile economic setting instead of bottling them up, that would go a long way to liberate them.

As a medium of development communication with unique aesthetic qualities that are found in, and not limited to sound and silence, Radio Drama creates events and condenses reality into dramatic constellations, with a high sense of authenticity rendered all-inclusive by the audience that must participate in the creation process with a strong sense of direction in a story, plot and moral. Radio Theatre would therefore, serve as a vibrant alternative to Development Theatre. This book does not pretend to propose a water-tight alternative to Development Theatre; it is only a contribution to an on-going search for alternative solutions to a deep crisis besetting the African continent. Like radio drama, it is a discussion space, a probing for alternations because the current offers are problematic. The Radio drama offers a valid if imperfect straw to clasp in the torrents that threaten to sweep African communities in the floods of development failures.

Postscript

Community Radio Stations for Mobilisation

Development experts in the third world have increasingly become aware of the tremendous role mass communication plays in mobilising people for community initiatives. That the mass media can make very significant contributions to developing societies can not be overemphasised. Indeed, exposure to mass media has been showcased in numerous occasions as an invaluable variable in triggering large scale directed social change and economic development in developing societies. The proliferation of radio sets and radio stations in Africa over the past two decades offers the useful role of radio broadcasting in community development. The effectiveness of its use can be further enhanced if radio stations are localised, and this has happened considerably albeit not enough in different countries in Africa. The programming of these radio stations should be geared towards specific interests and needs of the respective targeted audiences. Radio Hot Cocoa in Bamenda, North West Region and Eden Radio in Limbe, South West Region of the country have made strides in this direction although censorship and lack of resources have continued to be major hurdles. Eliz Gomez (1992, 92) chronicles the potential of radio in a developing society as follows:

Radio has continuously attracted considerable attention from national development planners because of its potential in helping solve some of the problems of developing countries. Not only does radio possess the intrinsic characteristics of speed, extensiveness, portability, and flexibility that give it a comparative advantage over the other mass media; it also performs with great efficiency the information, education and entertainment functions. The ability of radio to contribute to national development may also be attributed to the fact that people prefer it to other mass media because it fulfils certain psychological needs, extensiveness, portability, and flexibility that give it a comparative advantage over the other mass media. It also performs with great efficiency the information, education and entertainment functions, and radio listening is easier to do than

reading or viewing movies or television. Studies conducted in the Philippines and other developing countries have shown that radio is the preferred medium of mass communication because people can listen to it while working; it is easier to listen to radio than to read newspapers and magazines; there is lack of reading materials, or even if reading materials are available, people cannot read; and radio is more easily understood, more entertaining and more personal. The extent, however, to which radio can play an important role in community development, depends upon several factors. The most notable of these are the availability of radio sets, the number, location, and programming of radio stations, and the characteristics of present-day radio listeners.

Gomez makes a poignant point here given that radio stations would not be useful to the community unless receiver sets are readily available to the people. The advantage that developing societies have is that the availability of relatively cheap transistorized radios has made this less of a problem. In Cameroon, Nigeria and most African countries today, the increase in the number of radio stations and access to radio receivers has been phenomenal. (For statistics on this, see Kerr's findings in Chapter four).

In the advent of this boom in radio stations and radio set ownership, the location of radio stations becomes tremendously relevant as we contemplate the exploring of meaningful relationships between the communities and the radio stations. This is where development experts may come in to encourage or press for the placement of a certain number of one-kilowatt radio stations in a remote community than planting 10 kilowatt radio station in a city. The relevance of such a move is seen in the importance people place on their local radio stations. People generally prefer to listen to a station that gives them the local news that borders on their reality. They want to listen to programmes that help them address their concerns and programmes that they participate in. A local station provides numerous opportunities of rendering service to the general community, which is largely impossible with a bigger station located in a more metropolitan setting.

Also important and related to the location of radio stations is the question of programming. A radio station would be at the service of the community when its programming reflects the needs and concerns of that community and if the language used is understood by the audience. This adds to the arguments for localized programming. Having an insight into the target populations' way of life is also a factor to consider if community radio has to be a vehicle for social mobilisation. In today's increasingly competitive world radio audiences are likely to be picky in their choices of which radio station they want to listen to. The idea of mass-audience hitherto en vogue is being threatened by the new world reality of global interconnectedness.

In addition to these is the fact that present-day radio listeners seem to be too demanding. If radio has continued to be regarded as a good companion that is used mainly for entertainment, it has also become a very personal medium. Audiences would look at radio's usefulness not only in terms of its information and entertainment mechanism but also as a sort of adrenaline or social lubricant wherein they would easily share information and experiences with each other and thereby fostering interpersonal relationships. Additionally, radio audiences in Africa, which is part of the developing world, are too busy and often too exhausted; they work mostly in the field during the day. A radio station faces the issue of how to get such people to listen to its programme in a beneficial manner. This could be a serious problem especially given that arousing interest in a programme and sustaining such an interest are two very different endeavours the management of a radio station in conjunction with the development agency should do. Focusing on the DZLB example in Philippine, Gomez (1992, 95) succinctly suggests a way forward for community radio stations to serve as engineers of social mobilisation in a developing setting. He opines:

As information specialists know, radio as a mass medium can only create awareness, interest and favourable attitudes in the individual, but is less effective in providing specific

behavioural skills. On the other hand, face-to-face communication is influential in getting people to act, such as to adopt innovations. It is for this reason that DZLB enlists the full cooperation of government extension agencies and other institutions in its community development work. Neither interpersonal communication nor mass media alone can meet the enormous demands for modernization in developing countries. There is a need to strike a balance between the two methods of communication.

This close cooperation between DZLB and the agencies concerned begins as soon as an idea for a programme is hatched. The relevant staff of the cooperating agencies hold a joint meeting to discuss, and plan the series of preparation and related activities to be undertaken, followed by a chain of meetings and discussions. Once the plans for the programme have become final, an intensive listenership campaign is conducted jointly by DZLB personnel and the extension workers of the government or agency that produced the programme. During the programme people are not only talked to about the radio programme and how it can help them; they are also given supplementary printed materials.

The joint effort between DZLB and the agencies would not end when the programme is aired. The two parties continue to meet and share their views on the programme and the way forward. They come to terms with the fact that radio plays an invaluable role in community development. Inherent in the advantages of radio drama in this work are salient disadvantages.

Besides the obvious advantages of radio drama, is the fact that Radio is based in oral tradition. Every culture has traditions of story telling, and the fascination of listening to a good tale well told has never been lost. Even today, when television is so widespread, people in many cultures experience much of their entertainment through listening. A successful radio serial writer knows how to use this tradition to create an intriguing story that attracts and maintains a listening audience. In addition, radio appeals to and relies upon the

imagination of the listeners. The radio writer is not limited by what the audience can see, so there is ample opportunity to invite listeners to imagine a wide range of people, places, and events. A good radio writer knows how to tap into the imaginations of the listeners by creating strong word pictures, engaging characters, and action-filled events. Radio can also cross time and space without limit. The radio writer can move through time freely and create environments without restriction, as long as they seem appropriate to the audience. For example, listeners in a remote rural village in Cameroon's South West Region can "visit" and understand the inside of a large city airport if word pictures and sound effects are used effectively. Moreover, radio can go places and evoke images that are impossible in real life, or even on stage and television. For example, a radio writer can transport listeners to the inside of a ship, take them up thirty thousand feet in an airplane, or to the space station. Finally, radio is a personal medium. Although it can reach millions of listeners at the same time, radio nevertheless has the power to speak to each listener directly and individually. The good radio writer recognizes that the radio's message can be heard by people en masse and, at the same time, it can be interpreted personally by each individual listener.

It is not all rosy about radio drama, for it has limitations as well. The first obvious limitation of radio is that the total experience is received by the ear alone. This contrasts with the multisensory perception of everyday life. The writer therefore must remember to fill in details which in real life would be provided by the listeners' other senses, such as vision or smell. The writer must create scripts that allow listeners to imagine what they are hearing. Secondly, listeners are accustomed to using radio as a background to their lives, without paying full attention to what is being broadcast. Therefore when radio is used to motivate positive social change as recommended in this book, the writer must be sure to attract and hold the listeners' full attention, and to encourage listening literacy. Additionally, radio offers great opportunities for the use of sound effects and music. The good radio writer, however, uses these aids judiciously, recognizing that overuse of sound can be more

destructive than constructive on radio. As concluded in chapter five, successful radio drama depends more on powerful dialogue and strong emotional attraction than on added noise. Also, radio can be used to teach many things, but there are some areas where it falls short. For example, it would be difficult for a doctor to learn how to remove an appendix just by listening to a radio program. To overcome such difficulties, the writer should recommend support materials in other media (such as print) if the subject cannot be dealt with adequately through radio alone. The fact that a radio story or message is heard only once with no possibility of rewinding or playing back is a huge shortcoming. The radio writer, therefore, must ensure clarity, simplicity, and repetition in the delivery of important messages or educational information. Finally, radio seldom gives room for immediate practical audience participation which is one of the primary aspects of Development Theatre. Radio drama simply provokes a situation and leaves the audience with the facts, questions and issues. There is hardly any back-to-back interaction between the audience and the actor as obtains in mainstream Development Theatre.

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"If this notion of the "power of narrative" is sound, then it seems to me that Dr. Gomia's theses in this book warrant careful and serious consideration. While technologies are morally ambiguous, it appears to me that the objectives of Development Theatre are toward sustaining community and enhancing democratization. In the context of current African political and cultural struggles, these appear to me to be very laudable objectives. I thus recommend both this work and its author."

GEORGE W. SHIELDS, LITERATURE, LANGUAGES AND PHILOSOPHY, KENTUCKY STATE UNIVERSITY

"Path breaking in its originality and breath-taking in its coverage, this truly outstanding book critiques a variety of prevailing developmental paradigms on popular theatre practice in Africa, suggesting novel ways forward"

TATAH MENTAN, AUTHOR OF *THE STATE IN AFRICA*

"This is incisive research that stretches the frontiers of options available to practitioners of Theatre for Development."

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"The book widens the frontiers of research in literary, cultural, economic, and political studies...It is a wonderful reference text for ordinary men and women, students, researchers, and scholars"

DR. BABILA MUTIA, PLAYWRIGHT, UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE 1, CAMEROON

This book draws on years of rich empirical research on radio drama production in Cameroon to offer a strikingly new perspective in Development Theatre discourse in Africa. Chronicling the history and evolution of Development Theatre practice in Anglophone Africa and arguing for literary forms that address the basic everyday realities of ordinary people in a medium they understand, the book revisits the crucial question of utilitarian literature in a continent that continues to brandish a begging bowl even as it celebrates fifty years of independence. Radio Theatre's inherent latitude to reach the masses in a manner and with matter they identify with makes of it an invaluable albeit often neglected sub-genre in the universe of Development Theatre. Radio Drama disparages the omniscience of the purportedly indispensable and all-knowing superstructure, and provides for an enormous degree of authenticity for ordinary people seeking to enhance their self-esteem. It sets out to address collective concerns in an all-embracing approach that explores interactive learning characterized by continuous questioning of and adaptation to reality. Radio Drama creates events and condenses everyday life into original, participatory dramatic constellations with a strong sense of direction in a story, a plot and a moral. These people-oriented sensitivities are fertile ground for grassroots empowerment. With plays that address the rustic, ascetic and practical realities of ordinary people seeking liberation, Radio Drama is the point of departure for feasible development initiatives in Africa.

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